THE NABOB

A STORY OF

PARISIAN LIFE & MANNERS

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THE NABOB

VOL. II.

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A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE AND MANNERS

BY

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TRANSLATED BY E. CLAVEQUIN

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

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THE NABOB.

CHAPTER I.

MÈMOIRS OF AN OFFICE-PORTER. THE SERVANTS.

FORTUNE'S wheel in Paris has truly dizzy turns. To have seen the *Caisse Territoriale* as I saw it: rooms without fire, never swept, a desert with its dust, heaps of notices of protested bills lying upon the desks, every week a bill posted on the door announcing a sale by order of the court, and over all this my stew spreading the fumes of a poor man's dinner;—and now to witness the re modelling of our society in the newly furnished rooms, where I keep up fires as big as those in the Government offices, to hear the continual calls of the whistle, the electric

bells, the piles of gold pieces falling into the strong-box, whilst a busy crowd come in and go out in an unceasing stream—the change is truly prodigious! I must look at myself to believe in it. I require the evidence of the looking-glass, in which I see my steel-grey coat with a silver border, my white cravat, my chain of office, just like the one I used to wear at the Faculty of Dijon on gala days. And to think that in order to accomplish this transformation, to bring back to our faces good humour, the mother of concord, to give our bonds a tenfold value, to restore our Governor to the esteem and confidence he had so unjustly lost, it only required one man, that supernaturally rich man, whom the hundred voices of fame proclaim as the *Nabob!*

The first time he came to our office, with his fine presence, his features a little irregular perhaps, but so full of native distinction, the manners of one accustomed to courts, familiar with all the princes of the Levant, in short, with that easy and grand inde-

scribable something which an immense fortune gives to a man, I felt my heart melt beneath my waistcoat and its double row of buttons. People may talk of their equality and fraternity, but I tell you there are men so naturally above others, that you feel inclined to fall flat upon your stomach before them, and you would like to invent new forms of worship to force them to think of you. I may here add that I did not require anything like this to attract the Nabob's attention to myself. I had risen as he passed, moved, but still dignified—trust old Passajon for that. He looked at me, smiling, and said to the young man who accompanied him:

'What a jolly head of——'

I did not quite catch the last word. I know it was something ending in *ard*, perhaps Leopard. But it cannot be that; for I don't think I have a leopard's head.[1] Perhaps he said

[1] The Nabob probably said *Jobart*, which in French means: a half-witted fool, a ninny.

Jean Bart[1] — but I hardly know what he meant. What is quite certain is that he said: 'What a good head!' and naturally I felt proud of the compliment.

All our gentlemen are extremely kind and polite to me. It appears that the board discussed the propriety of keeping or dismissing me, as they did our cashier—that shabby fellow who always spoke of transporting everybody, and whom they sent to manufacture his economical shirt-fronts elsewhere. Well done, too! That will teach him to use coarse language to people.

As for me, the Governor was kind enough to overlook my unbecoming speech, in favour of my faithful services at the *Territoriale* and elsewhere; and when he left the board-room, he said to me with his musical voice: 'Passajon you stay with us.' Fancy if I felt happy, if I humbled myself in token of gratitude. Only think! I should have had to leave with my

[1] A famous sailor of the seventeenth century, very popular among the masses.

little savings and lose the chance of ever adding to them. I should have been obliged to go and cultivate my vineyard in that little hole of Montbars—a rather mean place for a man who has lived in Paris, in the midst of the financial aristocracy, and has witnessed banking operations by which huge fortunes are made. Instead of that sad prospect, behold me, settled once more in a splendid situation, my clothes renewed, and my savings—which by the way I held a whole day in my hand—entrusted to the Governor, who will kindly turn them to the best account for my advantage. He is the man to manage that sort of thing! There is not the least occasion to be uneasy. All fears vanish before the words which crop up continually at all the meetings of the board and the shareholders, at the Exchange, on the boulevards, everywhere:

'The Nabob is in the concern!'

In other words, gold overflows: and the worse *combinazione* are excellent.

That man is so enormously rich! rich to a degree that you can hardly believe it! Has he not, quite lately, lent in hard cash fifteen millions to the Bey of Tunis? Yes, fifteen millions! —just to play a trick to the Hemerlingues, who were doing their best to bring about a quarrel between that monarch and him, so as to take the bread out of his mouth in that country of golden cakes. It is an old Turk, whom I know, Colonel Brahim, one of the directors of the *Territoriale*, who has arranged that little affair. As was natural, the Bey, who was short of cash, felt it was very kind of the Nabob to oblige him so readily; and so he has just sent him, through Brahim, a letter to thank him, and to tell him that, on his next journey to Vichy, he will stay two days with him, at his beautiful château of Saint-Romans, where the late Bey formerly honoured him with his visit. What an honour, eh? A reigning prince! The Hemerlingues are raving mad! They had worked so hard, the son at Tunis,

the father in Paris, to ruin the Nabob in the prince's mind! True, fifteen millions is a large sum; but do not suppose for one moment that I am exaggerating. The person from whom I have gathered all my information actually held in his hands the Bey's letter, in a green silk envelope, with the royal seal; and if he did not read it, it is only because it was written in Arabic; otherwise, you may be sure, he would have made himself acquainted with it, as he does with all the Nabob's correspondence. For that person is his valet, Monsieur Noël, to whom I had the pleasure of being introduced no later than last Friday, at a small servants' party which he was giving to his friends. I give an account of this *fête* in my memoirs, as being one of the most curious things I have witnessed during my four years' residence in Paris.

When Monsieur Francis, Monpavon's valet, spoke to me of that party, I thought, at first, that it was to be one of those clandestine feeds, such as sometimes take place in the attics of

our boulevard, and which consist of fragments —remains of masters' tables, brought up by Mademoiselle Séraphine and the other cooks of the house, and at which you fill up and gorge yourselves with stolen wines, seated on boxes, trembling with fear, and only lighted by two candles, which are put out at the least creaking in the passage. Those secret doings are repugnant to my character.

When, however, I received a regular invitation, written in a fair hand, upon rose paper, just like the invitations to a ball in good society:

'M. Noël will bee apy too sea M. at his soiree, on the 25 incetant.'

'Thare will bee super.

I understood at once, in spite of the bad spelling, that this was a serious affair. Consequently, I put on my best frock-coat, my finest shirt, and I went to the Place Vendôme, at the address given on the invitation card.

Monsieur Noël had chosen for his party a

'first night' at the opera, to which everybody had gone, so that all the servants were free, and the whole house at our disposal.

Nevertheless, our host had preferred to receive us in his own room upstairs; and I think he did quite right, for I am of the opinion of good La Fontaine:

> 'Fie on pleasure
> Which fear can corrupt!'

But what splendid apartments are the attics in the Place Vendôme: a felt carpet on the floor, the bed hidden in an alcove, Algerian curtains with red stripes, a green marble clock; the whole lit up by moderator lamps. Monsieur Chalmette, the Dean of Faculty at Dijon, was not better lodged. I arrived at about 9 o'clock, with Monpavon's old valet, and I am bound to say that my entrance produced quite a sensation; for I had the prestige of my past academical career, my reputation for politeness and great knowledge. My fine figure produced also its effect, and there would be no use in

concealing the fact that I know how to present myself in society. Monsieur Noël, a gentleman of very dark complexion and short whiskers, received us in evening dress. 'Welcome, Monsieur Passajon,' said he to me. He took my silver-braided cap, which I kept in my right hand, as is customary, and gave it to a gigantic negro in red-and-gold livery.

'Here you, Lakdar, hang that up; and take that—' added he, by way of a joke, in giving him a kick in the lower part of the back. We had a good laugh over this sally. After that, we began to talk in a friendly way. An excellent fellow that Monsieur Noël, with his southern accent, his abrupt, frank, and simple manners. He reminded me of the Nabob—with less distinction, however. I noticed, that evening, that such resemblances are frequent enough in valets, who, living in daily contact with their masters, and naturally admiring them, end by taking their ways and manners. M. Francis, for example, has the knack of

drawing himself up and spreading his shirt front; a trick of raising his arms to pull down his cuffs, so that he is the very picture of Monpavon himself. There is one, however, who does not resemble his master, and that is Joe, Dr. Jenkins' coachman. I call him Joe, but at the *soirée* everyone called him Jenkins; for, in what I may call 'high life below stairs,' stablemen call themselves by their masters' names—Bois-Landry, Monpavon, Jenkins—without ceremony. Is that done to bring down their masters to their own level, or to raise themselves to the dignity of their masters? Every country has its peculiar customs, and it's only a fool who is astonished at it. But to return to Joe Jenkins: how is it that such an affable, such a perfect gentleman in every respect as the Doctor, keeps in his service that brute, bloated with porter and gin, who remains silent for hours, and who, as soon as he has a glass too much in his carcase, begins to roar and challenge everybody to a boxing match with

him, as witness the scandalous scene which had just taken place when we walked in?

The Marquis's little groom, Tom Bois-Landry, as we call him here, had passed his joke on that ruffianly Irishman; and the latter's reply had been a terrible blow of his clenched fist, full in the middle of the boy's face.

'Call me a walking sausage—me! a walking sausage, me!' repeated the coachman suffocated with anger, whilst his innocent victim was being carried into the next room, and the ladies were bathing his nose. The tumult was soon calmed, thanks to our arrival, thanks also to the soothing words of Monsieur Barreau, an old man, quiet and dignified, just in my style.

He is the Nabob's cook, a former *chef* of the 'Café Anglais,' whom Cardailhac, the lessee of the *Théâtre des Nouveautés* has procured for his friend. As he stood there, in his black coat and white tie, his fine, full, and well-shaved face, you might have taken him for one of the

great functionaries of the Empire. It is true that a *chef* in a house where the cloth is laid every morning for thirty persons, without counting Madame's table, and where all feed on the best of the land, is no ordinary cook; he receives the salary of a colonel, with board and lodging, not to speak of the perquisites — you can never imagine what the perquisites amount to in a house like this. Consequently, everybody addressed him respectfully, with the deference due to a man of his importance: 'Monsieur Barreau,' here, 'My dear Mr. Barreau,' there. For you must not imagine that servants stand on a footing of equality among themselves. The hierarchy is nowhere better preserved than among them; thus, for example, I noticed at Monsieur Noël's *soirée* that the coachmen did not associate willingly with the grooms, the valets with the footmen, nor the butler with the lower servants; and when Monsieur Barreau cracked his little joke, it would

have done your heart good to see how the lower tribes seemed to enjoy it. I am not against that sort of thing—quite the contrary; for, as our Dean used to say: 'A society without hierarchy is like a house without a staircase'—only the fact appeared to me worthy of being recorded in these memoirs.

Need I say that the *soirée* did not attain all its brilliancy until the return of its fairest ornaments, namely the ladies who were attending on little Tom:—ladies' maids with hair shining with pomatum, housekeepers in bonnets trimmed with ribbons, negresses, &c.; altogether a brilliant assembly, in which I obtained, from the first, a great triumph, thanks to my respectable appearance and to the pet name of 'uncle' with which the youngest among those amiable persons gratified me. I think there was a good deal of trumpery worn—faded silk, lace, and velvet, gloves with eight buttons, several times cleaned, and scent which came from Madame's toilet-table—but the faces wore an expression of satisfaction, and the minds were in a happy

frame, so that I soon managed to gather round me a very lively little company—where everything was quite proper, of course, as befits a man of my position. But propriety was the order of the day, or rather of the night. Till about the end of the repast, I heard nothing coarse, none of those scandalous stories, which the directors relish so much when there is a meeting of the board; and I am proud to be able to state that Bois-Landry the coachman, not to mention any other, is a far more gentlemanly man than Bois-Landry the master.

Monsieur Noël alone distinguished himself by the familiarity of his tone, and the vivacity of his sallies. That man never hesitates to call things by their names. He would call aloud to Monsieur Francis across the room:

'I say, Francis, your old rogue has again cheated us this week.'

And as the other drew himself up with his usual solemnity:

'Keep cool, old 'oss; the strong-box is cram full, you will never be able to exhaust it.'

It was then he told us of the fifteen millions loan of which I spoke above.

I was beginning to wonder that no preparations were made for the supper mentioned on the invitation cards, and whispered my doubts to one of my charming 'nieces,' who answered:

'They are waiting for Monsieur Louis.'

'Monsieur Louis?'

'Don't you know Monsieur Louis, the Duke de Mora's valet?'

Then they told me who that influential person was, whose protection, prefects, senators, and even ministers court, and who sells it them at a pretty jolly price, since, with his twelve hundred francs wages, he has managed to save a fortune of twenty-five thousand francs a year, to educate his daughters at the Sacred Heart, and to send his boy to the Bourdaloue College, besides having a châlet in Switzerland, where all his family pass the holidays.

As we were speaking of him, Monsieur

Louis came in; but nothing in his physique could have led anyone to guess what a unique position he occupies in Paris—no dignity in his manners, a waistcoat buttoned up to the neck, a sorry and insolent look, and a way of speaking without moving his lips, the reverse of polite.

He nodded slightly to the company, held out a finger to Monsieur Noël, and we all remained standing there, frozen to the bones by his grand ways, when a door opened at the other end of the room and we beheld the supper—all manners of cold viands, pyramids of fruit, bottles of all sizes and shapes, the whole lighted up by two candelabra.

'Come, gentlemen, your arms to the ladies!'

One minute after, we were sitting at table, the ladies next to the eldest and most important of us, the other fellows standing, serving, drinking out of everyone's glasses, and snapping up a morsel from all the plates. I

sat next to Monsieur Francis, and had to listen to his jealous anecdotes against Monsieur Louis, whom he envied because of his fine situation, compared to his own in the establishment of his ruined nobleman.

'He is a *parvenu*,' he whispered to me. 'He owes his fortune to his wife, Madame Paul.'

It would seem that Madame Paul has been twenty years housekeeper at the Duke's, and that she knows better than anyone else how to make a certain ointment for some infirmities which he has. De Mora cannot do without her. Seeing that, Monsieur Louis paid his devoirs to the lady, and married her, though much older than himself. His Grace, who did not wish to lose his housekeeper, was obliged to take her husband as his valet. If the truth must be told, I thought this arrangement a very good one, and quite consonant to the soundest principles of morality, since the two were married; but I did not say so to Mon-

sieur Francis. Besides, this first-rate supper, the best and dearest of victuals, the very names of which were unknown to me, had inclined me to indulgence, and put me in good humour. But everybody was not in the same frame of mind as I was; for I heard on the other side of the table the bass voice of Monsieur Barreau who was saying:—

'What business is that of his? Do I meddle with his service? In the first place, it is Bompain's concern, not his. And besides, what does he reproach me with? The butcher sends me every day five baskets of meat. I only use two, and sell him back the other three. Well! what *chef* does not do as much? Instead of ferreting in my kitchen, he would do better to reform the extravagance above stairs. When I think that the clique of the first floor have smoked twenty-eight thousand francs' worth of cigars in three months! Twenty-eight thousand francs, if a penny! Ask Noël if I lie. And on the second floor, in Madame's

apartments!—You should see the waste of linen, of dresses, worn only once and then thrown away—handfuls of jewels and pearls trodden upon and smashed — Wait a bit, though; I shall be even with that little gentleman yet.'

I at once understood that he spoke of Monsieur de Géry, the Nabob's young secretary, who often comes to the *Territoriale*, and is always poking his nose into the books.—Very polite, no doubt, but proud, and knows not how to behave.—There arose all round the table a perfect concert of abuse against him. Monsieur Louis himself assumed his grandest air to deliver himself as follows:—

'Our *chef*, my dear Monsieur Barreau, had lately just such a difference with his Grace's private secretary, who had taken the liberty of addressing to him a few observations respecting the expenditure. The *chef* went straight up to the Duke, in his official costume, his hand on his apron-string:

'"Your Grace must choose between your Grace's secretary and me," said he.

'And the Duke did not hesitate a moment. Private secretaries, you can have as many as you like, whereas the good *chefs* are known. There are four in all in Paris—I count you in the number, dear Monsieur Barreau.—We dismissed our secretary, therefore, and gave him a first-class prefecture to soothe his feelings; but we kept our *chef*.'

'That's the style!' said Monsieur Barreau, who was in an ecstasy of delight, as he listened to that story. 'That is the advantage of serving a *grand seigneur*. But *parvenus* are *parvenus*; what else could they be?'

'And Jansoulet is nothing more,' added Monsieur Francis, pulling at his wristbands. 'A man who was formerly a street porter at Marseilles!'

On hearing this, Monsieur Noël lost his temper.

'Look here, you old Francis, you are very glad to find the *Cannebière* porter to pay your

losses at cards. You don't find many *parvenus* like us who can afford to lend millions of money to kings, and whom grandees like Mora are not ashamed to ask to dinner.'

'Oh, yes, in the country,' sneered Monsieur Francis, showing his old tooth.

The other sprang up, scarlet in the face. He was angry; but Monsieur Louis motioned with his hand that he had something to say, and Monsieur Noël sat down at once, opening wide his ears, in order not to lose anything of the august speech.

'It is true,' said this personage, speaking without moving his lips, and sipping his wine, 'It is true we received the Nabob last week at Grandbois. There even occurred something very amusing. We have a great many mushrooms in the second park, and his Grace is sometimes good enough to gather some. Now, at dinner, on that day, they served a large dish of mushrooms. There were present—thingabob — what's his name — Marigny, the

Minister of the Interior, Monpavon, and your master, dear Noël. The mushrooms were handed round the table; they looked very good; the gentlemen filled their plates, except the Duke, who cannot digest them; but he said by way of encouragement to the others:

'"Oh, you know, I am not afraid of them. They are quite safe. I gathered them myself."

'"By Jove," said Monpavon, laughing; "then, my dear Auguste, I won't taste them."

'Marigny, less familiar with the Duke, kept looking suspiciously at his plate:

'"Yes, I assure you, Monpavon, they look all right, and I regret very much. I am no longer hungry."

'The Duke was looking very serious all the time.

'"Monsieur Jansoulet," said he, "I hope you, at any rate, will not put that slight upon me.—Mushrooms that I chose myself!"

'"Oh, your Grace, I would eat them with closed eyes."

'He was not lucky, the poor Nabob, for his first dinner with us. Duperron, who stood opposite him, waiting at table, told us all this afterwards in the servants' room. It seems that it was awfully funny to see Jansoulet stuff himself with mushrooms, rolling his frightened eyes in their sockets, whilst the others looked curiously on without touching their plates. The poor wretch was perspiring. But the best of it was that he took some a second time—yes, he had the courage to take some a second time; only he swallowed bumpers of wine, like a mason, after each mouthful—Well! now, shall I tell you? What he did there was very clever, and I am no longer astonished at this fat man having become the favourite of sovereigns. He knows how to flatter them—in their little secret vanities. In fact, since that day the Duke is infatuated with him.'

That story made us all laugh very much, and scattered the clouds which a few imprudent words had gathered. And then, when the

wine had loosened the tongues, when we knew each other better, we placed our elbows on the table, and began to talk of the masters, of the places where we had served, of the funny things we had seen. Oh! what adventures I heard, what strange things I saw pass before my eyes! Naturally, I, too, created my little sensation, with the story of my larder at the *Territoriale*, at the time when I used to put my grub into the strong box, which did not prevent our old, formal cashier from changing the ward of the lock every other day, as if the safe had contained all the treasures of the Bank of France. Monsieur Louis seemed to relish my anecdote very much. But the hero of the day was Tom Bois-Landry, when, with the tone of a young Parisian Arab, he related to us the household arrangements of his masters.

Marquis and Marchioness of Bois-Landry, second story, Boulevard Hausmann—furniture as grand as at the Tuileries—all the walls hung with blue silk—Chinese and other curiosities—

pictures, everywhere—a real museum, overflowing with *bric-à-brac* as far as the staircase—a well-appointed house, in truth: six servants, chestnut livery in winter, light yellow in summer!—These people are seen everywhere—at the private receptions on Mondays—at the races—at all first-nights—at the Ambassadors' balls—and their names in all the papers, with a notice of Madame's fine dresses and the swell style of Monsieur. Well! all that is nothing but sham and show; and whenever the Marquis is in want of a five-franc piece, he cannot find anyone willing to lend it him on the security of his estate! The furniture is hired by the week, from Fitily, the upholsterer of the *demi-monde*. The curiosities, the pictures, belong to old Schwalbach, who sends his clients there, and makes them pay twice as dear, because, of course, they dare not bargain when they think they are buying from a Marquis, an amateur. As for the Marchioness's toilets, the milliner and dressmaker furnish them gratis, every

season; make her wear the new fashions—odd-looking sometimes, but which the other ladies soon adopt, because Madame is a very handsome woman, and has a great reputation for elegance. She is, in fact, what they call a *lanceuse*. Lastly, the servants—lent like all the rest, changed every week at the good pleasure of the Servants' Registrar, who sends them there for a time, till they find more serious places! When a man has no references, has just left prison, or some other like place, Glanand, who keeps the great agency for servants in the Rue de la Paix, sends him to Boulevard Hausmann. He stays there one or two weeks, just time enough to get a reference from the Marquis, who, of course, does not pay him, and barely boards him; for, in that house, the kitchen fires are seldom lighted, as Monsieur and Madame dine out almost every evening, or get a supper at some ball or other. It is a fact that there are people in Paris to whom the buffet is matter of serious anxiety, and who

take their first meal after midnight. Therefore you will find the Bois-Landrys well up in the matter of houses with good buffets. They will tell you that you can get a good supper at the Austrian Embassy, that at the Spanish Embassy the wines are but so-so, and that it is at the Foreign Affairs you can have the best *chaud-froid de volailles.* And now you have the life of that strange couple. Nothing that they have belongs to them. Everything is, so to speak, tacked on, fastened with pins, and ready to fly away with the first gust of wind. At least they cannot lose anything, and that is what gives the Marquis the quiet sneering tone which he has when speaking to people, with his two hands in his pockets, like one saying:

'Well, sir, what next? You cannot do *me* any harm!'

And the little groom, in the said attitude, with his old-looking and vicious child's face, imitated his master so well, that I could fancy I saw him standing before the Governor, pouring upon him his cynical jokes in our

board-room. Well, it must be confessed that Paris is a stupendous place, since it is possible to live in it for fifteen and twenty years, deceiving everybody and throwing dust into people's eyes, without being known for what you really are—in fact, able to the last to enter triumphantly into a drawing-room, your name flung in by a stentorian voice:

'Monsieur le Marquis de Bois-Landry!'

How many things are learnt at a servants' party! What a curious thing Parisian society is, seen from the pantry! You would never believe it, unless you had seen it yourself. Take this other example: I sat between Monsieur Francis and Monsieur Louis, and here is a scrap of conversation between the two, respecting Monpavon, which reached my ear. Monsieur Louis said:

'You are wrong, Francis; you have got the cash just now; you should restore that money to the Treasury.'

'It is impossible,' answered Monsieur Francis, looking wretched; 'cards ruin us.'

'I know. But take care. We shall not always be there to protect you. We may die, be driven from power. Then you will be called to book, and it will be terrible.'

I had often heard whispers of that story about a forced loan of two hundred thousand francs which the Marquis had contracted against the State, in the days when he was Receiver-General; but the evidence of his own valet was the strongest proof of all. Oh! if masters only suspected all that their servants know, all they relate to each other in their hall; if they could see their names dragged among the sweepings and dirt of the kitchen, they would not even dare to tell them to shut the door, or to order the carriage. Look at Doctor Jenkins, for instance, who has the richest practice in Paris. He has been living for ten years with a splendid woman, a woman whose presence is courted everywhere. Well, he has vainly tried to conceal the true state of matters. It was in vain he advertised his marriage in

the papers, as they do in England; in vain he only took foreign servants who don't know three words of French. These three words, properly seasoned with coarse oaths and blows with his clenched fist upon the table, have sufficed his coachman Joe, who hates him, to tell us the whole story during supper:

'She is dying, his Irish wife—the true one. Remains to know whether he will marry the other. Madame Maranne is forty, and has not a shilling.—Is not she afraid to be dropped? That's all—Will he or will he not marry her? We shall see—and won't we laugh?'

And the more they made him drink, the more he talked, calling his mistress by the vilest names. As for me, I am free to confess I felt interested in this sham Madame Jenkins, poor woman who weeps in every corner, prays to her husband as she would to the hangman, and runs the risk of being abandoned, when society believes her a respectable married woman. The others only laughed; the women especially,

Naturally, it is amusing for servants to know that their ladies have also their disgraces and terrors, which keep sleep away from their pillows.

Our table, at that moment, presented an animated appearance; a circle of joyous faces stretched toward that Irishman, who was easy winner with his story. Some were jealous of him, and racked their memories to find some old forgotten scandal—stories of deceived husbands, life-tales served upon the kitchen table together with the remnants of dishes and the leavings of bottles. Champagne was beginning to tell upon the guests. Joe volunteered to dance a jig upon the table. The ladies, at the least allusion, threw themselves back upon their chairs with a sharp laugh, as if they had been tickled, whilst their embroidered petticoats trailed under the table among *débris* of victuals and spilt grease. Monsieur Louis had discreetly withdrawn himself. We kept filling up our glasses, but no longer drank them

off. A housekeeper dipped her handkerchief in her glass, and bathed her forehead, because, said she, she was getting dizzy. It was time all this came to an end. Just then, an electric bell, ringing in the passage, warned us that the footman, in attendance at the theatre, had just called the coachmen. Thereupon Monpavon proposed our host's health, and thanked him for his entertainment. Monsieur Noël informed us that he would give another at Saint-Romans—for the rejoicings on account of the Bey's visit—to which most of those present would probably be invited. I was on the point of rising in my turn, well knowing that, on such occasions, the oldest gentleman present is expected to propose the health of the ladies, when the door opened suddenly, and a tall footman, covered with mud, holding a streaming umbrella in his hand, rushed in, sweating, out of breath, and bawled out, without any respect for the company:

'Come on, you muffs; what are you doing there? Don't you know it is all over?'

CHAPTER II.

REJOICINGS IN HONOUR OF THE BEY.

In the south of France, a region of ancient civilisation, there are but a few historical *châteaux*, yet standing, to be met with. You hardly find, here and there, at long distances, some old abbey, showing on the slope of a hill, its trembling and ruined *façade*, pierced with holes that used to be windows, staring at the sky—a dusty monument, burnt up by the sun, and dating from the Crusades or the Courts of Love—not a trace of man among the ruins where the ivy and the acanth have ceased to climb, but which dry lavender and rosemary still perfume. Amid all these ruins, the château of Saint-Romans is an illustrious exception. If you have travelled in the south of France, you

have surely visited it, and presently you will see it again. It stands between Valence and Montélimart, on a site where the railroad runs along the steep bank of the Rhône, at the foot of the rich hills of Beaume, Raucoule, and Mercurol—the whole Ermitage wine-district, stretching on an expanse of five leagues its lines of serried vine-plants, which look like a green flock tumbling down into the broad river, full of verdant isles, like the Rhine in the neighbourhood of Basle, but bathed in more sunlight than ever was the Rhine's portion. Saint-Romans stands upon the opposite side of the river; and although the vision is rapid, and the wagons rush onward with all steam on, and look as if at every turn they were about to plunge madly into the Rhône, so vast is the château, it opens out so splendidly upon the neighbouring hill, that it seems to follow the hurried course of the train, and imprints for ever on the beholder's mind the picture of its flights of steps, its balusters, its Italian style,

its two low stories surmounted by a terrace with small columns, which commands the view of the long slopes, over which the water bounds in cascades, of the network of sandy and sloping avenues, the prospect of immense walks, bounded by some white statue, which stands upon the blue sky, as if upon the luminous ground of a stained-glass window. Above all that, among the wide lawns which contrast with the glaring sky, a gigantic cedar spreads its verdant crest, and its dark, floating shadows—exotic outlines, which remind you, as you stand looking at that former abode of a Fermier-Général of Louis XV.'s time, of some gigantic negro, carrying the umbrella of a courtly gentleman.

Saint-Romans de Bellaigne is famous, all along the valley of the Rhône, as a fairy palace; and, in truth, this oasis of verdure and fresh gushing water is like fairy-land, in that region scorched by the mistral's breath.

'If ever I am rich, mamma,' said Jansoulet,

when a child, to his beloved mother, 'I shall give you Saint-Romans de Bellaigne.'

And, as the life of that man seemed the realisation of one of the Arabian tales, as all his wishes, even the most exaggerated, became fulfilled, as his wild chimeras came and lay tamely at his feet, and licked his hands like familiar and fawning spaniels, he had bought Saint-Romans, and, after having gloriously restored and freshly furnished it, he had offered it to his mother. Ten years had passed since then; but the good woman was not yet accustomed to her splendid abode.

'It is Queen Jane's palace you gave me, wrote she to her son; 'I shall never dare to live there.'

And, indeed, she never lived there. She dwelt in the steward's house, a pavilion newly built, quite at the end of the property, to overlook the out-houses and the farm, the sheep-folds and the oil-mills, with their rural surroundings of stacks of corn, olive-trees, and

vineyards, stretching out on the plateau as far as the eye could see. In the grand *château*, she would have fancied herself a prisoner in one of those enchanted palaces where you fall asleep in the midst of your happiness and never wake up for a hundred years. Here, at least, the peasant woman, who had never been able to get accustomed to this colossal fortune—come too late, from too great a distance, and with the suddenness of a thunder-clap—felt connected with reality by the busy stir of the labourers, the coming and going of the cattle, their walk to the watering-pond, all that country life which woke her up with the crowing of the cock, the shrill screeching of the peacocks, and bade her come down the winding-stairs of the pavilion, even before dawn. She considered herself a mere caretaker of that splendid domain, which she kept for her son, and desired to give back to him, the day when, tired of living among Turks, he would return, as he said, to live with her under the shade of Saint-Romans.

You should have seen how indefatigable and universal was her supervision. In the mist of early morn, the ploughmen heard her hoarse and muffled voice:

'Olivier, Peyrol, Audibert . . . come on, it is four o'clock.'

Then she went to the huge kitchen, where the maids, heavy with sleep, were warming the soup on a clear and sparkling wood fire. They gave her a porringer of red Marseilles earthenware, full of boiled chestnuts,—the frugal breakfast of former days, which nothing could have induced her to change. Immediately after, she went out, walking in long strides, her large bunch of tinkling keys held to her waistband by a silver ring, her porringer in her hand, poised with the distaff that she held under her arm; for she spun the whole day long, and did not stop even to eat her chestnuts. She gave a look, *en passant*, at the stable, where the horses were heavily stirring, at the cattle stable with its stifling atmosphere, and impatient muzzles

stretched towards the door; and the first gleam of dawn, gliding on the courses of stones which supported the embankment of the park, lighted the old woman, as she ran in the dew, with the lightness of a young girl, in spite of her seventy years. Every morning she thus ascertained the state of the domain, uneasy till she had found that no one had, during the night, run away with the statues or the vases, rooted out the centenarian quinconces, and stopped up the springs in their babbling cradles. Even the noon sun, with the buzzing and humming which accompany it, cast the old woman's shadow on the sand of an alley, on the white wall of a terrace, as she went on, slender and straight like her own spindle, picking up the dry wood, breaking off a branch that came out too much, and never minding the burning rays, which glided upon her hard skin as on an old stone bench.

About this time, another being came out to walk in the park—less active, less bustling,

dragging himself along rather than walking, supporting himself against the wall and balusters—a poor, bowed-down, shaking, ankylosed being, with a face without life or age, never speaking, and uttering, when he was tired, a plaintive cry towards the servant who never left him, who helped him to sit down on some step or other, where he remained for hours silent and motionless, with hanging lips and blinking eyes, soothed by the monotonous rattle of the balm-crickets: a very rag of humanity, making a blot in the splendid prospect.

This man was the eldest brother, the *aîné*, as he was called, the darling of the old people, the beauty, the intelligence, the glorious hope of the nailer's family. Like so many other people in the south of France, the Jansoulets, faithful to the superstition of the right of primogeniture, had made great sacrifices to send to Paris the handsome and ambitious youth. He left, buoyed up with hopes, the wonder of all the maidens at Bourg-Saint-Audéol; but Paris,

after having, for ten years, beaten, wrenched, pressed in its huge vat, that brilliant sunny *chiffon*; after having burnt it in its vitriol, rolled it in all its mud; at last sent it back a tatter, a stray, brutalised, paralysed; not, however, before he had brought his father with sorrow to his grave, and compelled his mother to sell all she had, and, for a time, to become a domestic servant in her native place. Happily, about that time, when that waif of Parisian hospitals, sent home at the expense of the public, arrived at Bourg-Saint-Audéol, Bernard was already at Tunis making a fortune, and sending regular remittances to his mother. Poor Bernard—he used, in former days, to be called 'Cadet,' as is usual in those semi-Arabian families of the south of France, where the eldest assumes the family name, and the youngest the name of 'Cadet.' What remorse it was for the poor mother to owe everything, even the life and comfort of the sad cripple, to the strong and courageous boy, whom the

father and she had loved indeed, but without any affectionate weakness—whom they had, from the time he was five years old, treated like a common labourer, because, forsooth, he happened to be strong, woolly-headed, and ugly, and already understood better than any one at home how to traffic with old nails. How she wished she had her 'Cadet' near her, to return to him a little of the good he had done her, and pay back, once for all, those arrears of affection and maternal caresses which she owed him!

But, you see, those royal fortunes bring with them the cares and sadnesses of royal existences. That poor mother Jansoulet, in her magnificent property, was like a true queen; she knew the sorrows of long exiles, the cruel separations and trials, which compensate for greatness: one of her sons for ever an idiot, the other far away, writing little, absorbed by his great undertakings, ever saying, 'I am coming,' and never coming. In twelve years

she had only seen him once, in the whirr of a visit from the Bey to St. Romans. Such a tumult of horses, carriages, fireworks, and *fêtes*! Then he had left again, after his monarch, having hardly had time to kiss his old mother, who had kept nothing of that great joy, so impatiently looked forward to, but a few engravings in illustrated newspapers, in which Bernard Jansoulet was represented arriving at the château with Ahmed, and introducing his old mother to him—are not kings and queens' family greetings thus illustrated in public prints?—and a cedar of Lebanon, a big tree brought from the other end of the world, as costly and difficult to carry as the Obelisk itself, hoisted and put in its proper place by might of men, horses, and money, and to plant which, in commemoration of the royal visit, whole clumps of trees had been felled.

Now, Jansoulet was in France for several months, perhaps for ever, and she had hoped to have him all to herself. But he arrived, one

fine evening, surrounded by the same glorious halo, the same official display, by a crowd of counts, marquises—fine Parisian gentlemen, who filled, with their servants, the two breaks which she had sent to the Giffas station on the other side of the Rhône.

'Kiss me, dear mamma. You need not be ashamed to press your boy to your heart—your boy whom you have not seen for years. Besides, all these gentlemen are friends of mine; here is the Marquis de Monpavon, the Marquis de Bois-Landry.—Ha! it is no longer as in former days, when I used to bring home, to share our bean soup, little Cabassu and Jean-Baptiste Bompain.—You know Monsieur de Géry? And this is my old friend Cardailhac. These are the first batch. But others are coming; you are going to see a terrible stir. The Bey will be here in four days.'

'Again the Bey?' said the good woman frightened. 'I thought he was dead.'

Jansoulet and his guests could not keep themselves from laughing at the sight of the good woman's comical terror, which her southern accent made more funny still.

'It's another, mamma. There are always Beys. Luckily, by Jove! But don't be afraid; this time you won't have any trouble. My friend Cardailhac takes upon himself the management of the *fêtes*. They will be splendid. In the meantime, are the rooms and the dinner ready? Our Parisians are exhausted.'

'All is ready, my son,' said the old woman simply, stiff and straight in her cap with faded ribbons which she never left even on *fête* days. Fortune had not changed her; she was still the peasant woman of the Rhône valley, independent and proud, without any of the cunning humility of the *rurals*, painted by Balzac, but also too simple to have any conceit because of her riches. Her only pride was to show to her son with what careful attention she had done

her duty as a caretaker. Not an atom of dust anywhere, not a stain of damp on the walls. The splendid ground floor, the drawing-rooms with their fresh silks, the long summer galleries paved in mosaic, fresh and sonorous, with couches in Louis XV. style, the immense dining room decorated with branches and flowers, the billiard room with its ivory cues, its chandeliers and panoplies—the whole *château* in fact, with its windows wide open on the lordly terrace, offered itself to the admiration of the new-comers, and seemed to send back, to the marvellous horizon of nature and setting sun, its peaceful and serene beauty, reflected in the mirrors, in the varnished wainscot, with the same purity as are reflected in a lake the upright poplars and the sailing swans. So beautiful, so grand, was the general aspect, that the gaudy and tasteless details remained unobserved by the most searching eyes.

'We can work here,' said the lessee Car-

dailhac, his glass to his eye, his hat cocked on one side, combining already his theatrical display. The haughty features of Monpavon, whom the old woman's cap had shocked at first, relaxed, and he condescended to smile. They could work, certainly, and their friend Jansoulet, guided by men of their taste, might give to His Maugrabine Highness a very suitable reception. They spoke of nothing else during the evening. After dinner, well fed and warmed with wine, their elbows on the table, they discussed and devised in the sumptuous dining-room. Cardailhac, who had a taste for the beautiful and grand, had already made his plan.

'First of all, Nabob, you give me *carte blanche*.'

'*Carte blanche*, old fellow, and work away; and may stout Hemerlingue split with jealousy!'

Then the lessee explained his plans: the *fête* should be divided into days, as at Vaux, when Fouquet received Louis XIV. First day,

the comedy; second day, Provençal fêtes, farandoles, bull-fights, local music; third day . . . . And already, with his stage mania, he sketched programmes and drew up bills. Meanwhile, Bois-Landry, his two hands in his pockets, thrown back on his chair, slept, his cigar stuck in one corner of his sneering mouth; and the Marquis de Monpavon, mindful of decorum, kept drawing himself up to stay awake.

De Géry had left them early and had taken refuge with the old mother, who had known him and his brothers when they were children. He was now in the humble parlour of the pavilion, where the white curtains, the light paper loaded with prints, and a few relics saved from the wreck, reminded the Nabob's mother of her hard-working past.

Paul talked quietly with the fine old woman, who sat, upright in her chair, with regular and severe features, her white hair as thick as the flax on her distaff, and her flat chest wrapped in a little green shawl. She

had never in her life leant against the back of a chair or sat in an arm-chair. Paul called her Françoise, and she called him Monsieur Paul. They were old friends—and guess what they were speaking of? Why, of her grandchildren, Bernard's three boys, whom she did not know and wished so much to know.

'Ah! Monsieur Paul, if you knew how I long to see them! I should have been so happy if he had brought them here, the three darlings, instead of all those fine gentlemen. Only think, I never saw them, except in the portraits which are there. Their mother frightens me; she is a grand lady, a demoiselle Afchin. But the children are not proud, I am sure, and would love their granny. They would remind me of their father when he was a little child, and I should acquit myself towards them for what I owe to the father. For parents are not always just, Monsieur Paul. They show preferences. God alone is just. How He destroys the best-looking faces!

Ah! the preferences of the old often bring bad luck to the young!'

As she said this, she sighed, and looked towards the large alcove; and behind its high scallops and falling curtains, a shivering breath was sometimes heard, which sounded like the sleeping moan of a child who has been whipped and has cried himself to sleep.

They heard a step on the stairs, then a rough voice said gently: 'It is only me; don't move.' And Jansoulet appeared. Everybody had gone to bed in the château, and as he knew his mother's habits, and that her lamp would be put out the last of all in the house, he had come to see her, talk with her, give her that true hearty greeting which they could not exchange before strangers.

'Oh! stay, my dear Paul; with you we feel quite at home.' And, a child again in the presence of his mother, he threw himself down at her feet, on the ground, with a caressing action and truly touching words. She was

very happy certainly to have him near her; but she did not feel quite at her ease, for all that. She could not help seeing in him a mighty, extraordinary being; and, in her simplicity, she made a sort of Olympian god of him, surrounded him with thunder and lightning, and endowed him with omnipotence. She spoke to him, indeed, inquired whether he was still pleased with his friends, satisfied with his undertakings, but she did not dare to ask him as she had asked de Géry: 'Why have you not brought the children?' He was the first to mention the subject:

'They are at school, mamma, and they will come here to pass the holidays with Bompain. You remember Jean-Baptiste Bompain, don't you? You shall keep them here two whole months. You shall tell them those stories you used to relate so beautifully, and they will fall asleep, with their heads in your lap, like that.'

As he said that, he put his woolly head,

heavy like gold, on the knees of the good lady; just as he used to do in his childhood, falling asleep thus, when he was allowed and the eldest brother did not take all the room. For the first time since his return to France, he was enjoying a few minutes of delicious repose—so unlike his bustling and unreal life—hugged upon his old mother's heart, of which he heard the regular beat, like the pendulum of the old clock which stood in a corner of the room, in the great silence of the night and the solitude of the country, which is felt spreading over the boundless space.

Suddenly, the same long-drawn sigh, like that of a child fallen asleep in the midst of his sobs, was heard coming from the bottom of the room. Jansoulet looked at his mother, and inquired in a whisper,

'What is that? Is it ——?

'Yes; he sleeps there. He might want me during the night.'

'I should like to see him, embrace him.'

'Come!'

She rose gravely, took her lamp, went to the alcove, and gently opened the long curtains. Then she beckoned to her son to approach without making any noise.

He was sleeping. And no doubt, something lived again in his sleep which was not there during his waking hours; for, instead of the flabby insensibility in which he remained sunk the whole day, his frame was now shaken by long convulsive starts, and his dull lifeless face wore the contraction of suffering. Jansoulet looked down, with painful emotion, at that wan, withered, ashy face, whereon the beard, to which went all the vitality of the body, grew with surprising vigour; then he bent down, placed his lips on the damp forehead, and whispered gravely, respectfully, in the tone of one addressing the head of the family:

'Good morning, eldest brother.'

Did the captive soul hear it from the depth

of its dark and abject chaos? The lips moved, but a long moan was the only answer—something like a distant, despairing call for help, which brought powerless tears into the eyes of Françoise and her son, and wrung from them the same exclamation of sorrowful pity: "*Pecairé!*"—a local word expressive of all feelings, be it pity or affection.

Early the next morning, there was a great commotion, on the arrival of the actors and actresses: an avalanche of caps, chignons, top-boots, short dresses, affected voices, and veils floating over faded faces covered with fresh paint. The women were in great majority; for Cardailhac thought that, in theatricals got up for the Bey, it mattered little if the singing was out of tune, the important point being that the mouths should be pretty, the arms and legs well turned, to set off the easy costumes of an operetta. All the plastic celebrities of his theatre were therefore present, with Amy Férat at their head—a creature who had already

tried her fingers at the gold of several coronets; —there were also several famous clowns, whose pale and dull faces, chalky and spectral, made, like the plaster casts, blots among the green foliage of the quinconces. All those people, exhilarated by the journey, the fresh morning air, an abundant hospitality, and the hope of fishing something for themselves out of that crowd of Beys, Nabobs, and other rich magnates, frisked about, sang and laughed, with the caddish animation of Seine bargemen, when they leave their boats to enjoy themselves in a suburban village. But Cardailhac had other views. As soon as the troupe had arrived, washed themselves, and breakfasted, he made them take their parts and rehearse. There was no time to lose. The rehearsal took place in a little room near the summer gallery, where men were already at work, constructing a theatre. The noise of hammers, of couplets, shrill voices, accompanied by the conductor's violin, mixed with the loud shrieks of the

peacocks on their perches, and melted in the blast of the mistral which, not recognising the rattle of its favourite crickets, shook all that noise contemptuously away with the flapping of its pinions.

Sitting in the middle of the porch, as if in the front of his stage, Cardailhac superintended the rehearsal, gave his orders to the workmen, the gardeners, condemned trees to be felled because they spoilt the prospect, drew the shape of triumphal arches, sent despatches, couriers, to mayors and sous-préfets—to Arles, in order to procure a deputation of country-girls in their national costume—to Brabantane, where the handsomest farandole-dancers are to be found —to Faraman, famous for its *manades* of wild bulls and Camarguese horses. And as he freely used the names of Jansoulet and the Tunis Bey, he met with no refusal anywhere. The telegrams fled away in every direction, the messengers killed their horses on the roads, and that little stage Sardanapalus, yclept Car-

dailhac, kept repeating: 'We can work here,' happy to scatter gold about like chaff, to display his talent on a stage of fifty leagues—the whole of Provence, the native province of that mad Parisian, all the picturesque resources of which he had at his fingers' ends.

Thus ousted out of her own, the old lady showed herself but little anywhere, and only minded the farm and her sick son. She felt bewildered and scared by that crowd of visitors, those insolent valets, who could not be distinguished from their masters, those impudent coquettes, those old men with shaven faces who looked like bad priests—all those madmen, chasing each other in the passages during the night with their pillows, wet sponges, and tassels torn from the curtains, and used as projectiles. Her son ceased to come to her in the evening, as he was obliged to attend to his guests, the number of whom increased every day as the *fêtes* drew nearer. She could not even talk of her grandchildren with de Géry, for

Jansoulet, embarrassed by his serious friend, had kindly sent him to his brothers for a few days. The careful housewife was continually disturbed about a room, some more linen, some more plate. And she thought with regret of her splendid piles of embroidered coverlets, and the sacking of her dressers and cupboards; for she remembered the passage of the late Bey, alas! and the state of the château when he left. It was as if a cyclone had passed there. 'I wish the Beys were far away,' she would say in her patois, as she moistened feverishly the flax of her distaff.

At last the day came, the famous day of which the country-people are still speaking. This time the old lady sat at the head of the breakfast table, in a new cap and ribbons, and around her sat many Parisian celebrities—prefects, *députés*, in their official costumes and wearing their swords—mayors in their tri-coloured scarves, and freshly-shaven curés. At three o'clock, breakfast being over, Jansoulet,

in evening dress and white tie, surrounded by his guests, came out on the porch, and beheld the magnificent landscape studded with flags, triumphal arches, trophies, heaving heads—the rich colours of the dresses covering all the hills, crowding all the avenues; here, grouped like a basket of flowers on the lawn, stood the prettiest Arlesian girls, their unitoned faces delicately rising, as it were, out of their lace fichus; below them the farandole-dancers of Brabantane, with their eight tambourines, ready to start off, their hands intertwined, their ribbons flying in the wind, their hats on one side of their heads, their red *tailloles* round their loins; further, on a lower terrace, the black lines of orpheonists, all in dark clothes and brilliant caps, the flag-bearer at their head, grave, with closed mouth, full of self-importance, his hand on the carved flag-staff; lower down still, on a broad cross-way transformed into a fighting circus, black bulls in shackles, and, astride on their little horses with long

white manes, Camarguese *Gauchos*, their gaiters above their knees, and each holding a raised trident in their hands ; then again, flags, helmets, bayonets, as far as the first triumphal arch ; further still, as far as the eye could see, on the other bank of the Rhône—over which two companies of pontoniers had thrown a bridge, so that the Bey might drive without hindrance from the station to Saint-Romans—an immense crowd, whole villages, came pouring down from every hill, and gathered on the Giffas road, amid the shouts and the dust, sitting on the sides of ditches, climbing on the elms, heaped up on carts—a formidable living hedge along which the *cortége* was to pass. Over all that, a glorious glaring sun sent its rays everywhere—to the brass of a tambourine, to the point of a trident, to the fringe of a banner ; and the grand Rhône, wild and free, carried away to the sea the moving panorama of that royal fête. As he looked down on those marvels which shone with the gold of his coffers, the Nabob

could not restrain a movement of admiration and pride.

'It is very beautiful!' said he, growing pale.

Behind him, pale also with unutterable terror, his mother murmured:

'It is too beautiful for a man. It looks as if God himself were coming.'

What the old Catholic peasant woman felt, was felt also by all those people assembled on the road, as if to witness the passage of a gigantic Corpus Christi procession. That Eastern Prince, coming to pay a visit to the son of the land, recalled to their minds the legend of the Magi, the arrival of Gaspard the Moor, bringing to the carpenter's son myrrh and a tiara.

In the midst of the affecting congratulations offered to Jansoulet, Cardailhac, perspiring but happy, who had not been seen since morning, suddenly made his appearance.

'Did not I tell you that we could produce a splendid effect here? Is not that grand,

Eh? That is a prospect for you! I rather think our Parisians would pay a good deal to secure a place at a first representation like this.' And lowering his voice, because of the old mother who stood near:

'Did you see our Arlesian beauties?' he asked. 'No? Look at them, then. Notice the first—that one in front of all the others, who is preparing to offer the bouquet.'

'Why, it is Amy Férat.'

'Precisely. You can easily understand, my dear fellow, that if the Bey drops his handkerchief in that crowd of pretty girls, there must be one ready to pick it up. The others, innocent creatures, would not know what he means. Oh! you may trust me, I have not forgotten anything, you'll see. Everything is got up and regulated as for the stage. Those represent the rural side of nature—this one the pleasure garden.'

In order to give an idea of his perfect or-

ganisation, the lessee raised his stick, and, at once, his motion being repeated from one end of the park to the other, all the orpheonists, all the bands, all the tambourines, burst forth in the majestic rhythm of the popular song, '*Grand Soleil de la Provence.*' The swell of the voices and brass instruments made the streamers flutter in the air, and set the feet of the farandole-dancers in motion. From the further bank of the Rhône, a buzz passed like a breeze over the crowd—it probably arose from the fear lest the Bey should have arrived by some other way. The lessee made another sign, and the immense orchestra became silent, not so suddenly this time but a few stray notes shot up here and there in the foliage. But you could hardly expect less from an orchestra of three thousand persons.

The carriages were now approaching—state carriages which had been used for the late Bey's festivities—two pink and gold chariots, such as are the fashion at Tunis, which old Madame

Jansoulet had preserved like relics, and which came from their shed, with their painted panels, their hangings of silk and their gold fringes, as fresh as the first day. Here again, Cardailhac's genius had been freely at work; instead of horses—which would have appeared rather heavy with the light painting—the chariots were drawn by eight mules adorned with knots of ribbon on each side of their heads, with tufts and silver bells, and covered from head to foot with that wonderful harness of Spanish broom which Provence seems to have borrowed from the Moors, and carried to the utmost degree of perfection. Surely the Bey could not but be satisfied.

The Nabob, Monpavon, the Prefect, and one of the Generals entered the first carriage; the other guests took their places in the second, and in ordinary conveyances. The curés, the mayors, warmed by the good cheer, placed themselves at the head of the orpheonists of their several parishes, who were to meet the

cortége on its way, and all began to move onward towards Giffas.

The weather was splendid, but hot and sultry, three months in advance of the season, as often happens in those forward regions, where everything is ripe before its time. Although there was not a cloud visible anywhere, yet the closeness of the atmosphere, —for the wind had suddenly fallen like a sail that is furled—the space white with diffused light, a solemn silence hanging over the face of nature—everything, in short, betokened a storm brewing in some corner of the horizon. The torpor of inanimate nature spread by degrees over living beings. Nothing was heard but the bells of the mules as they ambled slowly on, and the rhythmic and heavy tramp, upon the cracking sand, of troops of singers, that Cardailhac had disposed at short intervals among the swarming beings who everywhere bordered the road; here and there a call, the voices of children, the cry of a man retailing cold water

—the necessary accompaniment of all open-air fêtes in southern climes.

'Open the carriage on your side, General; we are stifling here,' said Monpavon, who was crimson in the face, and feared for his paint.

When the windows were opened, the good people could perceive those high functionaries wiping their august but apoplectic faces, which all wore the same anxious look of expectation —expectation of the Bey, of the storm, of something, in short.

One more triumphal arch. This is Giffas, and its long stony street strewn with green branches, and its dirty houses covered over with flowers and hangings. Out of the village, the white and square station, placed like a die on the edge of the line—a true type of a little country station, lost among the vines, with never anyone in its waiting room, except sometimes an old woman with her bundles, who waits in a corner, having come three hours too early.

The light construction had been decked with flags and trophies, ornamented with carpets and ottomans; and, in honour of the Bey, a buffet, with a splendid lunch and sherbets, was ready for His Highness. Arrived here, the Nabob forgot the uneasiness which he, too, had felt without knowing why. Prefects, generals, deputies in black coats or embroidered tunics, stood on the broad interior foot-path, in imposing and solemn groups, wearing their sweetest smiles, poising themselves with a waving motion, drawing themselves up jauntily, as functionaries are apt to do when they know the eyes of the public rest upon them. How many noses of good people outside were pressed against the window-panes to see so many fine gentlemen, all those hierarchical embroideries, Monpavon's shirt front—which seemed to get wider and higher, like a *soufflé d'œufs à la neige*—Cardailhac, panting, issuing his last orders, and the good face of Jansoulet, their own Jansoulet, with his

sparkling eyes, looking, above his chubby and sunburnt cheeks, like two gold nails in the goffering of Cordovan leather! All at once the sound of the electric bell was heard. The station master in his Sunday's best came running along the line.

'Gentlemen! the train is signalled; it will be here in eight minutes.'

The news startles everybody, the same instinctive movement makes them all look at their watches—only six minutes more. —Then, somebody, breaking the silence, says:

'Look there, gentlemen!'

On the right, in the direction from which the train was coming, two high hills covered with vines formed a species of funnel, into which the line entered and disappeared as if swallowed up. At that moment all the background was as black as ink, darkened by a stupendous cloud, which, like a gloomy bar, cut the blue sky, figuring rocks, high basaltic

cliffs, on which the light, pale like that of the moon, made large white patches. On that solemn deserted road, along that silent line of rails, edged with people awaiting the passage of His Highness, there was something terrible in the sight of that aerial cliff which kept advancing, projecting its shadow forward, with that illusion of perspective which gave to the cloud a slow, majestic motion, and to its shadow the rapidity of a galloping horse.

'What a storm we shall have presently!'

Such was the thought that occurred to all, but they had no time to express it, for a shrill whistle was heard, and the train appeared in the depth of the dark funnel.

A truly royal train, this, rapid and short, decked with French and Tunisian flags, its panting and smoking engine adorned in front with an enormous bouquet of roses, like the maid of honour of a Leviathan wedding.

The engine slackened her speed as she neared the station, the functionaries grouped

themselves, drew themselves up, steadied their swords, settled their collars, whilst Jansoulet went along the line to meet the train with an obsequious smile on his lips, and his back already bent for the *Salam Alek*.

The train was moving very slowly. Jansoulet thought it would stop, and put his hand on the door of the Royal saloon carriage, all glittering with gold.

But the train kept moving on. The Nabob walked alongside of it, trying with one hand to turn the handle of that blessed door which would not open, and, with the other hand, beckoning to the engine to stop. The engine did not obey.

'Stop! Stop!'

It did not stop. Growing impatient, he jumped on the velvet-covered steps, and, in that saucy way which so much pleased the former Bey, he thrust his big woolly head into the carriage, and called out:

'Saint-Romans, your Highness.'

You know that species of vague light which we see in our dreams, that dull and lifeless atmosphere in which all things take the shapes of phantoms—by such an atmosphere was Jansoulet suddenly enveloped, paralysed. He tried to speak; but the words stuck in his throat; his helpless hands held on to their support with such a weak grasp that he nearly fell backwards. What had he seen?

Half lying down on an ottoman which occupied the other side of the saloon, his fine unitoned head resting on his elbow, with his long silky black beard, the Bey, buttoned up in his oriental tunic, with no other ornaments than the broad ribbon of the Legion of Honour across his chest, and a diamond aigrette on his cap, was quietly cooling himself with a little fan of Spanish broom bordered with gold. Two *aides-de-camp* and the company's chief engineer were standing beside him. Facing him, on another ottoman, in a respectful but favoured attitude, since they alone sat in the

presence of the Bey, were the two Hemerlingues, father and son, both yellow, their long whiskers falling upon their white ties, looking like two owls, the one fat, the other lean. They had re-conquered His Highness, and were taking him in triumph to Paris. What a horrible dream! All those people who knew Jansoulet very well, yet stared at him as coldly as if his face did not remind them of anything. Frightfully pale, large drops of perspiration standing on his forehead, he stammered:

'But, your Highness, don't you come d——'

A livid flash of lightning, like the flash of a sword, followed by a terrible clap of thunder, cut him short in the middle of his speech. But the light which shone in the eyes of the sovereign was far more terrible to him. Standing upright, his arm outstretched, with a voice rendered a little guttural by his habit of rolling hard Arabic syllables, yet in very pure French, the Bey withered him with these studied words, slowly spoken:

'Go home, mercanti; where the heart leads, thither follows the foot; mine shall never go to the man's who has robbed my country.'

Jansoulet tried to speak. The Bey made a sign: 'Go!' The engineer sounded the electric bell, the whistle of the engine answered the signal, and the train, which had kept its slow pace, stretched its iron muscles and rushed forward, all steam up, waving its flags in the storm, amid clouds of black smoke and sinister lightning.

He, Jansoulet, stood speechless on the line, staggering like a drunken man, dumbfounded, staring at the receding train which carried away his fortune, and insensible to the large drops of rain falling on his bare head. The other men hastened towards him, surrounded him, and pressed him with inquiries:

'Does not the Bey stop?'

He muttered a few unconnected words.

'Court intrigues . . . infamous plots . .

And suddenly showing his fist in the direc-

tion of the receding train, his eyes bloodshot, the froth of anger on his lips, he roared like a wild beast: 'Blackguards!'

'*De la tenue, Jansoulet, de la tenue!*—Bear up, Jansoulet, bear up, man!'

You easily guess who it was that said that, as he passed his arm under the Nabob's, trying to make him hold himself up, and throw out his chest even as he did himself. Monpavon led him to his coach through the stupefied wearers of embroidered coats, and helped him in, resistless, horrified, like a chief mourner hoisted into a mourning coach when the sad ceremony is over. The rain was beginning to fall, thunder-clap followed thunder-clap. They quickly entered the carriages and drove home. Then took place a scene at once heartrending and comical—one of those cruel strokes of pitiless destiny, kicking its victims when they are on the ground. In the doubtful light of twilight, in the growing darkness of the storm, the thick crowd, blocking up the approaches to the station, thought they

could distinguish his Highness among the embroidered personages; and, therefore, as soon as the carriages began to move, an immense clamour, a frightful shout, pent up for the last hour in all those chests, burst forth, rose, waved, and bounded from hill to hill till it reached the valley:

'*Vive le Bey!*'

Warned by this signal, the first bands struck a flourish, the orpheonists followed suit, and the uproar extending from crowd to crowd, the road from Giffas to Saint-Romans looked like surging billows, from which arose one uninterrupted roar. It was in vain that Cardailhac, the other guests, and Jansoulet himself leant out of the windows, and made desperate signs:

'Enough, stop!'

Their signs were lost in the tumult, in the night, or they were mistaken for an encouragement to shout louder. And I assure you there was no need of it. All those *méridionals* whose enthusiasm had been kept at a glowing

heat since morning, excited still more by a long enervating expectation and the bursting storm, shouted with all the might of their voices, of their lungs, of their noisy enthusiasm, mixing with the hymn of Provence that cry, ever repeated, which cropped up like its proper burden: '*Vive le Bey!*' Most of them had not the faintest idea what sort of a thing a Bey was, could not imagine it; but they nevertheless laid stress upon that strange name, as if it had been written with three *b*'s and a dozen *y*'s. They became excited with it, raised their hands, waved their hats; and their excitement increased with the means they took to express it. Some women's feelings were so overwrought that they actually shed tears. All at once, a shrill child's voice, issuing from the top of an elm, called out:

'Mamma, mamma! I see him!'

Of course he saw him. They all saw him! Everyone could have sworn that he had seen him!

Before this tremendous delirium, considering how impossible it would have been to silence and calm down the crowd, there was but one thing to do, viz. leave them alone, and drive at full speed, to shorten this hard martyrdom as much as possible. But then the confusion became worse confounded; it was terrible! On seeing the row of carriages begin to run, all the people on the road began to gallop with them. Led on by the muffled sound of their tambourines, the farandole-dancers of Brabantane bounded, hand in hand, going and coming, a true human garland, around the carriage-doors. The orpheonists, out of breath with the double exertion of singing and running, but keeping on their howl for all that, dragged after them their flag-bearers, with their flags flung over their shoulders. The good curés, scarlet and panting, pushing before them their bulky overtasked stomachs, found yet time to whisper into the mules' ears, with sympathetic and feeling voices.

'*Vive notre bon Bey!*'

Add to all that the rain—the rain which fell in pailfuls, in liquid masses, washing away the paint off the pink coaches, increasing the confusion—and you have an idea of that triumphant return home, which looked like a rout, but a rout with a dash of the comic element in it, a rout mixed with songs, laughter, furious embraces, and oaths. Something not unlike a procession returning to the church in a storm, the cassocks turned up, the surplices thrown over the heads, and the host sheltered hastily under a porch.

The dull soft rolling of the wheels told the poor Nabob, anxious and silent in a corner of his coach, that they were crossing the bridge of boats.

They were arriving.

'At last!' said he, looking through the trickling window, at the foaming waters of the Rhône, the roar of which appeared peaceful to him after what he had just experienced.

But at the end of the bridge, when the first

carriage reached the triumphal arch, rockets began to burst, and drums beat a salute—the salute offered to the monarch on the land of his trusty servant—and, to put the last touch to this irony of fortune, the top of the château suddenly blazed in the twilight, and showed gigantic letters of fire, which ran like huge shadows in the wind, but could nevertheless be distinctly read: 'VIVE LE BEY MAHMED!'

'This crowns all,' said the unfortunate Nabob with a pitiful, bitter smile. But he was mistaken; the finishing stroke awaited him at the door, and it was dealt by Amy Férat, who came to present him with a bouquet, leaving for that purpose the group of Arlesian girls, who had taken shelter under the marquee, to save their skirts and their caps of worked velvet, while waiting for the first coach. Holding her bouquet in her hand, with bashful looks, her eyes lowered, her stockings well drawn upon her well-turned ankle, the pretty actress ran to the coach door, almost kneeling in her bow, which

she had been studying for the last week. Instead of the Bey, Jansoulet alighted, stiff and pale, and passed on without even looking at her. And as she stood there, her bouquet in her hand, with a sheepish look:

'Take away your flowers, my girl; it is a bad job,' said Cardailhac, with that chaffing tone of a Parisian who takes things as they come. 'The Bey is not coming; he had forgotten his handkerchief.'

The night is come. They are all sleeping at Saint Romans after the great excitement of the day. The rain is falling in torrents; and in the great park, where the triumphal arches and trophies show vaguely their dripping carcases, nothing is heard save the streaming of the water along the stone steps transformed into cascades. A noise of water, of pouring, running water. Alone in his sumptuous room, where stood a lordly bed with lampas curtains and purple borders, the Nabob strides up and down, agitated by sinister thoughts. It is not

his late disgrace which harrows him with anxiety now—that public outrage inflicted in the presence of 30,000 persons—nor is it the insulting words which the Bey addressed to him before his mortal enemies. No, that *méridional*, that creature of physical impulses, which succeed each other rapid as the fire of the new breechloaders, has already digested all the venom of his rancour. Are not court favourites ever prepared by famous precedents for these overwhelming disgraces? What frightens him is that he sees something terrible behind that public insult; he is thinking that all his property, houses, factories, ships, are at Tunis, at the mercy of the Bey, in that lawless Levant, the country of ruthless despotism—and, leaning his burning forehead against the streaming window panes, perspiration running down his back, his hands cold, he stands there, looking into the dark night, silent like his own destiny. Suddenly, he hears the noise of steps, hurried knocks at the door.

'Who is there?'

'Monsieur,' says Noël, coming in half dressed, 'it is an urgent telegram brought by a messenger.'

'A telegram! What other blow am I going to receive?'

He takes the blue envelope, opens it with trembling fingers. The god, struck twice already, is beginning to feel vulnerable, to lose his self-confidence. He begins to know the fears, the nervous weaknesses of other men. His eyes run quickly to the name of the sender. MORA! Is it possible? The Duke —the Duke to him! Yes, it is so— M—O—R—A.

And below:

'*Popolasca is dead. Immediate election in Corsica. You are the official candidate.*'

Député! This was salvation. With that, nothing to be feared. You cannot treat a representative of the great French nation as you would a mere mercanti. Donc, the Hemerlingues!

'O my Duke, my noble Duke!'

So great was his emotion that he could not sign. Suddenly:

'Where is the man who brought this despatch?' said he.

'Here, Monsieur Jansoulet,' answered, in the passage, a good familiar voice with a Provençal accent.

He was lucky, the messenger.

'Come in,' said the Nabob.

He gave him back the signed receipt. Then he plunged his hands into his pockets, ever full of gold, took as many napoleons as his hands could hold, and threw them into the cap of the poor stammering, bewildered man, dazzled by the fortune which came upon him like a surprise, in the night of that fairy palace.

CHAPTER III.

A CORSICAN ELECTION.

'Pozzonegro—near Sartène.

'At last I am able to write to you, my dear Monsieur Joyeuse. We have been five days in Corsica; but we have had to run about so much, to speak so much; we have so often changed carriages and horses, travelling sometimes on mules, sometimes on donkeys, and even on men's backs when crossing torrents; we have written so many letters, backed so many petitions, visited such a number of schools, given so many chasubles, so many altar-cloths, restored such a quantity of old steeples, and founded so many infant-schools; in short, there has been such ado with inaugurating, toasting, speech-making, wine-drinking,

and eating of cream-cheese, that I have not, before this, found time to send an affectionate greeting to the little family-circle sitting round the large table, from which I have been absent these last two weeks. Luckily, my absence will not last much longer, as we intend leaving this place the day after to-morrow, and going straight to Paris without stopping. So far as the election is concerned, I think our journey has been a success. Corsica is an admirable country, indolent and poor, a mixture of pride and misery, which compel noble and *bourgeois* families to keep up appearances, at the expense of the most painful sacrifices. Here, they speak very seriously of Popolasca's fortune, that needy deputy who lost by his death the hundred thousand francs which he was to get by resigning in favour of the Nabob. All the people here have, moreover, a positive thirst for Government places; a sort of administrative fury; a want of wearing some kind of uniform, a flat cap with something like "Government

employé" written upon it. Were you to give a Corsican peasant his choice between the richest farm in Beauce, and the humblest village policeman's shoulder-belt, he would not hesitate a moment, but would choose the shoulder-belt. Matters being so, it is easy to imagine what chances a candidate has who possesses a large private fortune, and can moreover dispose of Government favours. There is no doubt but that Monsieur Jansoulet will be elected, chiefly if he is successful in the business upon which we are now here—the only inn of a small village called Pozzonegro. I should tell you that Pozzonegro means 'black well,' and deserves its name; it is a real well, black with verdure, including fifty little houses in red stone, grouped around a high Italian steeple, in the bottom of a valley surrounded by steep hills and dark sandstone rocks, and studded with larch and juniper-trees. From the window where I am writing, I see before me a patch of blue: it is the orifice of the black well; lower

down upon the little square—shaded by an enormous walnut tree, as if the shade were not already thick enough—two shepherds in untanned skins are playing cards, leaning on the stone of a fountain. Gambling is the plague of this country of idleness, where peasants are brought over from Lucca to gather in the harvest. The two poor beggars before me would not find a single farthing in the remotest corner of their pockets; one plays his knife against the other's cheese wrapped up in vine-leaves, and the two stakes lie side by side upon the bench near them. A little curé smokes his cigar in looking at them, and seems to take the liveliest interest in their game.

'And that is all! Not the least noise around, except the water dripping upon the stone, the occasional exclamation of one of the players, who swears by the *Sango del Seminario*, and, in the room underneath mine, the excited voice of our friend and the stammering of the illustrious Paganetti, who acts as his interpreter,

in his conversation with the no less illustrious Piedigriggio.

'M. Piedigriggio (Grey Foot) is a local celebrity. He is a tall old man of seventy-five years of age, as straight as a pole, wearing a little cloak on which falls his long white beard, a brown woollen Catalan cap on his hair, white also, and, in his belt, a pair of scissors, with which he cuts long green tobacco leaves in the palm of his hand. He really has a venerable look; and when I saw him cross the square to shake hands with the curé, and greet the players with a protecting smile, I would never have guessed he was the famous bandit Piedigriggio, who from 1840 to 1860 infested the district of Monte Rotondo, and set at defiance the line and the gendarmerie. Now, thanks to prescription, although he has committed seven or eight murders by shooting or stabbing, he enjoys considerable importance. This is why: Piedigriggio has two sons who, following nobly in the footsteps of their father,

have made too free with their carbines, and now hold the mountain in their turn. They cannot be found anywhere, and, consequently, cannot be caught, which is an exact repetition of their father's life for twenty years. The shepherds keep them duly informed of the gendarmes' presence anywhere, and as soon as the latter leave a village, the brigands make their appearance there. Scipio, the eldest, came to mass last Sunday at Pozzonegro. It cannot be said that they are liked, and that the hand, dripping with blood, which those wretches hold out, is taken with pleasure by their neighbours—that would be a libel on the peaceful inhabitants of this village—but they are feared, and their will is law.

'Now then, the Piedigriggi have taken a fancy to support our adversary at the next election; and this protection is a matter of great importance, as it can make two whole districts vote against us; for the scoundrels' legs are as long, proportionately, as the reach

of their guns. The gendarmes are with us, naturally; but the brigands are far more powerful. Our host was putting it to us this morning thus simply:

'"Gendarmes go, but brigands stay."

'The logic of this argument had its effect. We understood that there was only one thing for us to do: make a contract with the Piedigriggi. The mayor mentioned the matter to the old man, who consulted his sons; and they are now discussing downstairs the clauses of the treaty. I hear from here the governor's voice,

'"Come, old fellow, I am an old Corsican too, you know!"

'The old fellow gives his answer in a quiet tone, cutting meanwhile his tobacco in his hand, with a noise that sets my teeth on edge. The brute does not seem to have confidence in us, and, I fear, so long as the money is not paid down, there will be no business done.

'For Paganetti is well known in his native

country. To know how much his word is worth, they have only to look on the Corte Square which shines by the absence of Paoli's monument, to remember his tricks, to weigh the empty purses of all those unfortunate village curés, small bourgeois, needy nobles, whose slender savings he has swindled away with the fanciful mirage of his *combinazione.* In truth, it required his stupendous impudence, and all the resources now at his disposal, to have enabled him to face his dupes here, and silence all complaints.

'In short, the great works which the *Caisse Territoriale* was to achieve are an absolute shadow. It is all a huge swindle. There are no mines—they only exist on paper; —no quarries, at least none that know as yet either the pick-axe or the blasting powder; but plenty of fallow and sandy land, which he shows with a wave of his hand as he tells you:

'"We shall begin here, and shall go as far as there."

'It is the same thing with the forests—there is a whole side of Monte Rotondo which belongs to us, it seems, and is well wooded; but it is impossible to get at the trees, unless the wood-cutters could be sent there in a balloon. The same thing can again be said of the watering places which were to be opened, the most important of which is this very Pozzonegro: a wretched hamlet, but with a fountain of ferruginous water highly celebrated—by Paganetti. As for steamboats, they are a myth. Not quite, though; there is an old ruinous Genoese tower, on the shore of Ajaccio Bay, with an inscription in gilt letters on a board over the locked door: "Paganetti's Agency. Steamboat Company. Inquiry office." Grey lizards and owls alone keep the office. As for the railways, I saw all those good Corsicans smile with a knowing air whenever I spoke of them. They winked, muttered half finished, mysterious sentences, that I could not make out; until at last, this very morning, I succeeded in

obtaining a rather funny explanation of all this reticence.

'I must tell you first, that I had read, among the papers which the governor sometimes waves before our faces like a fan wherewith to swell his puffs, the contract of sale of a marble quarry in a place called Taverna, two hours' walk from Pozzonegro. Wishing to clear up this point, I took a mule this morning, and went to Taverna, without mentioning the matter to anyone, only taking as my guide a tall, lithe fellow, as light as a stag, the true type of a Corsican poacher or smuggler, with his big red pipe between his teeth, and his gun flung crosswise on his back. After a frightful march across gaping rocks, quagmires, bogs of unfathomable depths, along which my mule seemed to relish walking, we arrived by a steep slope at the end of our journey—a vast desert of rocks, absolutely bare, white with the deposit of sea-gulls; for the sea is very near, down below, and the silence of the place is only

broken by the noise of the waves and the shrill cries of large flights of birds whirling above head. My guide, who has a holy horror of custom-house officers and gendarmes, remained on the cliffs, dreading the neighbourhood of a post of coast-guards, who are there to watch the shore; and I went on towards a large, red, three-storied house, which stands alone in that parched solitude, all its panes of glass broken, a tileless roof, and an enormous plate on its worm-eaten door: "*Caisse Territoriale. Quarr . . . ble . . .* 54." The wind, the sun, and the rain have eaten up the rest.

'There is no doubt some sort of work has been commenced here; since a large, square, gaping shaft roughly opens in the soil, showing, like signs of leprosy, along its frittered sides, large red spots, with brown veins; and at the bottom, among briers, enormous blocks of that kind of marble called *griotte* in the trade. Those abandoned blocks are of no use, for want of a road leading to the quarry, or of

a port where boats could load—or rather for want of the enormous sums it would require to make either the one or the other. Therefore does the quarry remain neglected within a few cables' length of the shore, useless and a nuisance, like Robinson Crusoe's boot in similar circumstances. I obtained these sad details respecting our landed property from an unfortunate caretaker, shivering with fever, whom I found in one of the lower rooms of the yellow house, trying to roast a piece of venison over the sharp smoke of a lentisk fire.

'That man comprises in his own person the whole staff of the *Caisse Territoriale* in Corsica. He is Paganetti's foster-father, and a former keeper of a lighthouse, and therefore accustomed to solitude. The governor leaves him there a little out of charity, and also because letters dated from Taverna, which occasionally reach Paris, have a good effect at the meetings of the shareholders. It was not without a deal of trouble that I ultimately suc-

ceeded in obtaining some information from this semi-savage, who looked at me rather distrustfully from behind his goat-skin *pelone*. However, he gave me, without knowing it, an explanation of the meaning which the Corsicans attach to the word *railways*, and now I know why they take such mysterious airs when speaking of them. I was trying to ascertain whether he knew something of a projected line in the country; and the old man, with nothing of the cunning smile of his countrymen, but naturally, with his dull voice, rusty like the grating of an old lock, said in rather good French:

'"Oh, sir, we don't require railways here."

'"And yet they are very useful to facilitate communications."

'"I don't say anything to the contrary. But gendarmes suffice for that purpose."

'"Gendarmes?"

'"Yes, of course."

'The *quid pro quo* lasted a good five minutes, after which I began to understand that the

secret police are known here by the name of 'railways.' There are many Corsican detectives on the Continent, and that honest euphemism is used by their families when they mention the ignoble trade. You ask a man here, "Where is Ambrosini, your brother?" "What is Barbicaglia, your uncle, doing?" They answer you with a wink: "He has a situation in the railways," and everybody knows what that means. Among the people, peasants who have never seen railways, and do not even know what the word means, it is seriously believed that the great occult administration of the imperial police has no other name than that. Our chief agent here shares that touching simplicity. This will suffice to make you understand the state of the *Line from Ajaccio to Bastia, through Bonifaccio, Porto Vecchio,* &c., as it stands written on the large green-backed ledgers of the firm Paganetti & Co. To sum up, the assets of the *Caisse Territoriale* consist in a few boards, and two old tumble-

down houses, hardly good enough to figure in the mason's yard, at the top of the Rue Saint Ferdinand, which haunts me, every evening, when I am about to fall asleep, with the creaking noise of its weather-vanes and the slamming of its doors in the empty space.

'But now, a question arises. What has become of the enormous sums which Monsieur Jansoulet has paid for the last five months—not to speak of other people's money, attracted by that magical name? I was always of your opinion respecting the boring for mines, the purchase of land, which are entered in a fine round hand into our books, and I thought them grossly exaggerated. But how was it possible to suspect such a height of impudence? This explains why the governor showed such reluctance to my coming on this canvassing journey. It is not my intention to ask for an immediate explanation. My poor Nabob has enough to do with his election: Only, as soon as we arrive home, I shall place before his eyes all

the particulars of my painful inquiry, and I shall, whether he likes it or not, force him to leave that den of thieves. The business below is finished. Old Piedigriggio is now crossing the square, and pulling the ring of his peasant's purse, which looks pretty well filled. I suppose they have struck the bargain. Farewell, in haste, dear Monsieur Joyeuse. Remind me kindly to the young ladies, and keep me a little place round the work-table.

'PAUL DE GÉRY.'

The electoral whirl, which had wrapped them up in Corsica, crossed the sea behind them like a blast of the sirocco, followed them to Paris, and breathed its scathing breath in the apartments of the Rue Vendôme, which became filled, from morning to night, with its usual frequenters, increased by a constant stream of small, dark men, with regular features, hairy, some noisy, chatting, spluttering, just like Paganetti, others silent, self-possessed, and dogmatic: the two types of the race on which the same

climate produces dissimilar effects. All those hungry insulars, from the most distant parts of their wild country, met, as if by appointment, around the table of the Nabob, whose house had become an inn, a restaurant, a market-place. In the dining room, where the cloth was ever ready laid, you could always find a newly arrived Corsican breaking his fast with the scared and gluttonous look of a country cousin.

The swaggering and noisy race of election agents is the same everywhere; but the Corsican variety distinguish themselves by a something more fiery, a more excitable zeal; a turkey-like vanity carried to exaggerated lengths. The smallest scribe, check-taker, mayor's clerk, village schoolmaster, spoke as if he had a whole district behind him, and the pockets of his threadbare coat full of voting-papers. The fact is, that in Corsican villages —and by this time Jansoulet knew it—families are so old, so limited in number, and branch out into so many ramifications, that many a

poor fellow who breaks stones on the roads might with some show of truth claim kinship with the mightiest in the island, and consequently possesses real influence. The national disposition, proud, cunning, plot-loving, and vindictive, aggravates still more all those complications; and it follows, therefore, that it is necessary to be very careful, lest one should fall into some of those snares laid from one side of the country to the other.

The worst was, that all those people were jealous of each other, hated each other, and quarrelled over the table about the election, exchanging black looks, and clasping their knives at the least contradiction. They spoke all together and very loud—some in the sonorous and hard Genoese dialect, and others in most comical French—stifling with restrained anger, hurling at each other's heads barbarous names of unknown places, dates of local stories, the very sound of which called up between the adversaries two centuries of family hatred.

The Nabob lived in continual terror lest his breakfasts should end tragically, and tried to appease all that violence with his good, conciliating smile. But Paganetti reassured him. The *vendetta*, according to him, though still vivacious in Corsica, has but rarely, and that among the lower orders only, recourse to the stiletto or carbine. Anonymous letters now replace those deadly weapons. And, indeed, the Nabob received every morning anonymous letters couched in language somewhat as follows:

'Monsieur Jansoulet, you are so generous that I think it my duty to warn you against Monsieur Bornalinco (Ange-Marie), who is a traitor bought over by your enemies. It is quite different with his cousin Bornalinco (Louis Thomas), who is quite devoted to the good cause.'

Or else:

'Monsieur Jansoulet, I fear your election will come to no good if you continue to employ Castirla (Josué) of the Omessa district,

whereas, on the contrary, his relative Luciani is the man for you.'

Although he had ceased at last to read those notes, the poor candidate could not but be affected by all those doubts, all those passions. He felt as if caught in the meshes of minute intrigues; he was unnerved, full of terror, distrust, anxiety, and fever, and verified the truth of the proverb: 'If you hate a man, wish him an election in his family.'

As may be imagined, the cheque-book and the three big drawers of the mahogany chest were not spared by the swarm of devouring locusts fallen upon the Nabob's apartments. You cannot fancy anything more droll than the haughty manner in which those good islanders managed to raise their loans—gruffly, defiantly. And yet they were not the worst, and most of them were satisfied with stuffing their pockets with cigars, as if they intended to open cigar stores on their return home. But, even as during the great heat of summer wounds become

redder and more inflamed, so had the election given fresh impetus to the downright swindling organised in the house. There were the tremendous expenses for publicity, Moëssard's articles sent to Corsica in bales of twenty or thirty thousand, with portraits, biographies, pamphlets—all the printed tumult which it is possible to raise round a name. There were also the usual suction-pumps, drawing from the reservoir of millions—the '*Œuvre de Bethléem*,' a powerful engine with slow but energetic strokes; the *Caisse Territoriale*, a wonderful and indefatigable, triple-acting exhauster, of several thousand horse-power; the Schwalbach pump, the Bois-Landry pump, and many more: some enormous, noisy, with shameless pistons; others quiet, discreet, with well-oiled clappers; diminutive valves, bijou pumps as small as those insects' suckers which produce their wounds and deposit venom in the place whence they have drawn life. And all these pumps worked with touching harmony, and

must at last produce, if not a complete drought, at least considerable diminution of level.

Evil though vague rumours already circulated on the Exchange. Was it a manœuvre of his enemy, of that Hemerlingue, against whom Jansoulet was waging a merciless war with his money, trying to undermine all his financial operations, and losing considerable sums in so doing, because he had against him his own excitement, the coolness of his adversary, and the blunders of Paganetti, his man of straw? Anyhow his star had grown dim. Paul de Géry knew that, through old Joyeuse, who was now a clerk in a stock-broker's office, and well acquainted with affairs on 'Change. But what frightened him most was the strange state of excitement of the Nabob—that want of forgetting, succeeding that beautiful calm, full of strength and serenity; and the loss of his Provençal sobriety, the way in which he would drink several glasses of *raki* before meals, speaking loud, bursting into roars of laughter, like a

sailor 'on the spree.' He was evidently trying to drown in excesses a pre-occupation, visible, nevertheless, in the sudden contraction of all the muscles of his face, when a disagreeable thought obtruded itself, or when he feverishly turned over the leaves of his ungilt portfolio. That serious conversation, that decisive explanation, which Paul desired to have with Jansoulet, was constantly evaded by the latter. He passed all his nights at his club, his mornings in his bed. From the moment he awoke, his room never ceased being full of people, who told their business whilst he was dressing, and whom he answered whilst washing. If, by a miracle, de Géry caught him for a second, he ran away, cut him short by such a phrase as this: 'Not now, I beg.' At last the young man had recourse to heroic means.

One morning, at about five o'clock, Jansoulet, returning from his club, found on his table, near his bed, a note, which he took at first for one of those anonymous informations which he

received every day. It was indeed a denunciation, but signed this time, wearing no mask, full of the loyalty and serious manliness of him who had written it. In it de Géry told him all the infamy, all the sponging of which he was the victim. He mentioned the villains by their names. He looked with suspicion on all the usual guests of the Nabob, and did not think a single one of them came here with any other object than robbing or lying. From the roof to the basement of the house, nothing but pillage and waste! Bois-Landry's horses were worthless; Schwalbach's gallery a swindle; Moëssard's articles, a means of extorting money. De Géry had prepared a detailed report of those shameless abuses, and every charge was supported by proofs. But the thing he particularly recommended to Jansoulet was that part of the report which concerned the *Caisse Territoriale*, as there, in his opinion, lay the special danger of his situation. In other matters, the risk was one of money only; but here

his honour was at stake. Drawn into that infamous den by the Nabob's name, by his title of Chairman of the Board, hundreds of men had taken shares—gold-seekers following in the track of the lucky miner. This circumstance invested him with a terrible responsibility, which he would clearly see if he read the report, in which he, de Géry, proved that the concern was nothing but a sham and a swindle.

'You will find the report,' thus de Géry ended his letter, 'in the first drawer of my desk. With it are several receipts. If I have not put all that in your room, it is because I mistrust Noël as much as the others. This evening I shall give you the key, on taking leave of you—for I leave you, dear friend and benefactor. I go full of gratitude for all the good you have done me, and heart-broken at the idea that your blind confidence does not allow me to serve you. At this moment my conscience would upbraid me, were I to remain any longer

occupying a useless post. I am witnessing a sad disaster, the sack of a summer-palace, and I feel helpless to prevent it; but my heart sickens at the sight. I shake hands with those men, and I feel dishonoured by the act. I am your friend, and I must appear their accomplice. Who knows whether I should not become so, by living longer in such an atmosphere?'

This letter, which the Nabob read slowly, gravely, line by line, and word by word, produced upon him such a strong impression that, instead of going to bed, he went straight to his young secretary's apartment. De Géry occupied, at the other end of the suite, a small room, where they made him a bed upon a sofa—a temporary accommodation which he did not wish to have changed. All in the house were still sleeping.

The rooms *en suite* not being used for evening receptions, the curtains were never drawn, and the dim light of dawn made the

objects visible. The Nabob stopped, struck by the stained and sad look which all the rich furniture wore. In the heavy atmosphere of stale tobacco and spirits, the furniture, the ceiling, the wainscot, though new, looked faded already. There were stains upon the crumpled silk, ashes tarnished the fair marble, and the traces of dirty boots upon the carpets gave to the rooms the look of an immense first-class railway carriage, where the listlessness, impatience, and *ennui* of a long journey have left their marks—marks of careless scorn for bought comforts. Standing in the midst of those decorations—still alive with the atrocious comedy which was played there every day—the Nabob saw his own image reflected in twenty cold and dull mirrors; he looked out of place in his elegant costume, at once sinister and comical, with his swollen eyes and burning face.

What a day of disenchantment this was, after the mad life he had lately led!

For one moment he remained sunk in his

dark thoughts; then he made that vigorous shrug of the shoulders which was familiar to him, the motion of a bale-porter by which he, so to speak, shook off his too painful anxieties, shoved into its right place his burden of human miseries—such a burden as we all carry about, and which bows us down more or less, according to our courage or strength. He entered de Géry's room, and found the young man already up, and standing before his open desk, in which he was arranging some papers.

'In the first place, my friend,' said Jansoulet, softly closing the door behind him, 'answer frankly my question. Is it for the reasons mentioned in your letter that you are leaving me? Is there not, under all this, some one of those infamous calumnies which I know circulate about me in Paris? Surely you would be honest enough to tell me, and place me in a position to—to defend myself before you?'

Paul affirmed that he had no other motives

than those mentioned, which were indeed sufficient, since it was a matter of conscience.

'In that case, Paul, listen to me, and I am sure you will stay. Your eloquent, honest, sincere letter has told me nothing which I have not known these three months. Yes, dear Paul, you are right. Life in Paris is a more complicated affair than I thought. What I required, when first I arrived here, was an upright and disinterested guide to guard me against men and their doings. I have met parasites only. All the scoundrels about town have wiped the mud of their boots on my carpets. Just now I was looking at my rooms. They require thorough sweeping, and, by Heaven! they shall have it. But, first of all, I must be a *député*. All those rogues help in my election, and that election has become too necessary for my interests to allow me to run the least chance of losing it. In one word, this is the state of matters: Not only does the Bey refuse to refund the fifteen millions which

I lent him a month ago ; but, moreover, on my requesting him to do so, he answered by putting in a counter-claim for eighty millions, which, says he, I have swindled his brother out of. That is an infamous lie, and an abominable robbery. My fortune is my own, truly my own. I made it as a commission agent. I was Ahmed's favourite. He put in my way opportunities of becoming rich. I may have put on the screw rather tight, sometimes; but you must not judge that sort of thing with your European notions. In that country they all do it, and it is considered legitimate. It is like the tribute paid us by savages to whom we introduce European comforts. That wretched Hemerlingue, who eggs on the Bey against me, has done a thousand times worse. But it is of no use discussing this. I am in the jaws of the wolf. While waiting for me to explain myself before his courts of law—I know Eastern justice —the Bey has laid an embargo on all my property—ships, palaces, and all they contain. All

is perfectly regular, and in pursuance of a decree of the Supreme Council. It is easy to see the hand of Hemerlingue's son under it all. If I become a *député*, it does not signify. The Council will revoke their decree, and my wealth will be restored to me with all kinds of apology. If I am not elected, I lose everything, sixty, eighty millions, and even the possibility of making another fortune. It is ruin, dishonour, an abyss. Come, my boy; will you leave me at such a crisis as this? I have no other friend in the world but you. Think of it. My wife?—you have seen her, you know her; you know that there is no help, no reliance in her for her husband. My children?—I might as well have none. I never see them; they would hardly know me in the street. The horrible luxury in the midst of which I live has banished every kind of affection from me, and attracted around me shameless persons whose only object is self-interest. There are none to love me but my mother who is far away, and

you whom she has sent me. No, you must not leave me alone in the midst of those calumnies which creep around me. It is a terrible life that I lead, I assure you. At the club, at the theatre, wherever I go, I can perceive the viper's head of Madame Hemerlingue, I hear the echo of her hissing, and feel the venom of her malignancy. Everywhere the conversations stop when I appear; I see taunting looks, lying smiles, a species of kind, humiliating pity. My acquaintances leave me; they fly as if they felt that I bring misfortune with me. Take Felicia Ruys, for instance. When my bust is nearly ready, she takes refuge behind the pretext of an accident, so as not to send it to the *Salon.* I said nothing, I pretended to believe her; but I well knew that there also some infamous slander had done its work. And, mind you, it is truly unfortunate for me. In a crisis so grave as the one I am going through, everything has some importance. Had my bust, signed by that celebrated artist, been exhibited,

it would have done me a world of good in Paris. But it was not to be—everything is cracking, is sinking under me. You see, Paul, that it is impossible you should leave me.'

CHAPTER IV.

A DAY OF SPLEEN.

FIVE o'clock in the afternoon. Rain ever since morning; a grey sky, so low that you could touch it with your umbrella. The weather, soft and sticky. Slough, mud; nothing but mud in thick puddles and long shiny streaks along the foot-paths; mud which sweeping machines and sweeping women vainly try to keep down. Enormous tumbrils carry it slowly, triumphantly away through the streets, towards Montreuil, ever shaken and ever renewed. It seems to grow between the paving-stones; it splashes carriages, horses, and passengers' clothes; it squirts the windows, the doors, the shops; and you might almost believe that Paris is about to sink and disappear under that sloughy

soil where all things blend in monotonous confusion. It is really a pitiful thing to see the invasion of that leprosy on the new, white houses, the parapets of the quays, the colonnades which support stone balconies.

And yet there is one whom this spectacle rejoices: a poor, disgusted, and sick woman, who, stretched upon the embroidered silk of a couch, her head resting upon her closed fists, looks out with some sort of pleasure through the streaming window, and finds delight in that huge ugliness.

'Look, Fairy. That's exactly the weather for me to-day. See them wade in the mud. How hideous. how horrid they are! What mire! There is some everywhere, in the streets, on the quays, and even in the Seine, even in the sky. Ah! how good mud is when you are melancholy! I should like to tramp in it, work with it, make out of it a tremendous statue one hundred feet high, and call it my *ennui*.'

'But why are you *ennuyé*, darling?' said

the old dancer kindly, fresh and amiable in her armchair, where she sat upright for fear of spoiling her hair, still better done than usual.

And with her calm voice, she went for the hundredth time through all the reasons which Felicia had of being happy: her fame, her talent, her beauty, all the handsomest and mightiest men at her feet. Yes, the mightiest, since this very day—— At this point of her address a formidable mewing, like the melancholy cry of a jackal weary with the monotony of its desert, shook all the panes of the windows, and made the ancient chrysalis shrink back frightened into her cocoon.

Felicia had sent her group to the exhibition a week ago; and ever since she had sunk into a state of prostration, heart-sickness, and desolate and helpless irritation. It required all the fairy's patience, all the magic of her souvenirs, evoked every moment, to make her life barely bearable, to soothe that uneasy weariness, that angry heartlessness which growled in the silent

bosom of the young girl, which suddenly burst out in a bitter word, in an exclamation of disgust, for the slightest reason, and for no reason at all.

Her group is hideous, she thinks; nobody will speak of it. The critics are donkeys, and the public a pack of jackasses. And yet, the other Sunday, when the Duke of Mora came here with the Superintendent of Fine Arts to look at her group, she felt so happy, so proud of the praise they gave her, so completely delighted with her work! She admired it, as she would have admired the work of a brother artist; for the bond between her group and herself which warped her mind whilst the fire of inspiration burnt in her, had been destroyed with the completion of the work, and she had felt impartiality even in judging herself.

It is every year thus: when the studio is deprived of her last work, when her glorious name is once more exposed to the capricious judgment of the public, Felicia's restlessness, ceasing to have a visible object on which to expend itself,

feeds on the emptiness of her heart, of her woman's existence, gone out of its tranquil groove; and this lasts until she begins a new work. At such times, she locks herself up, refuses to see anyone. It is as if she had no confidence even in herself. Our good friend Jenkins is the only one who can put up with her during one of those fits—nay, he even seems to like them, as if he expected something from them. And yet, God knows how little she is amiable with him. Not later than yesterday, he stayed two hours face to face with that wearied young girl, who did not address him a single word. Is that the sort of reception she intends to give this evening to the great personage who does them the honour of dining with them?—Here the gentle Crenmitz, who turns all those thoughts in her head, her eyes fixed on the tips of her shoes, remembers suddenly that she has promised to prepare a dish of Viennese pastry for the dinner of the personage in question, and leaves the studio, discreetly, on tiptoe.

The rain, still! still the mud! and the beautiful sphinx is still in the same position, half sitting, half lying, her eyes fixed on the miry horizon. What is she thinking of? what is she watching on those dirty roads, in the dimness of approaching night, with that knitted brow, and those lips curled in scorn? Is she awaiting her destiny? Sad destiny indeed, if it comes in such weather, fearless of darkness and mud.

Somebody walks into the studio, with the step of a mouse, like Constance's. It is the page, no doubt. Felicia says fiercely, without turning round:

'Get away! I am not at home for anyone.'

'I should have liked so much to say a few words to you,' answers a friendly voice.

She starts, sits up, and suddenly relents. With a gentle laughing voice she addresses the unexpected visitor:

'Is it you, young Minerva? How did you come in?'

'Very simply. All the doors were open.'

'I am not surprised. Constance is half mad since this morning with her dinner.'

'Oh yes, I saw you expected somebody to dinner. The anteroom is full of flowers.'

'It is a stupid, official dinner. I cannot understand how—— Sit down there, near me. I am happy to see you.'

Paul sat down, a little confused. She had never seemed to him so beautiful before. In the half-light of the studio, among the dim objects of art, bronzes, tapestries, her pale face looks like a soft light, her eyes have the shimmer of precious stones, and her long riding-habit outlines the gracefulness of her divine body. Her voice is truly affectionate, and she seems happy to receive Paul's visit. Why did he stay so long away? It is more than a month since she saw him. Are they no longer friends? He apologises as well as he can: business—a journey— Besides, though he did

not call here, he often spoke of her—oh! very often, almost every day.

'Indeed, with whom?'

'With——'

He was going to say, 'with Aline Joyeuse,' but he stops himself. An indefinable feeling, something like a shame to sound that name in the studio which has heard so many others, restrains him. There are things which do not chime together, though we cannot explain why. Paul prefers answering by a lie which brings him straight to the object of his visit:

'With an excellent man whom you have hurt without any reason. Come, tell me, why won't you finish that poor Nabob's bust? He would have been so happy, so proud, to have his bust at the exhibition. He had relied upon it, quite.'

On hearing that name, 'the Nabob,' she became slightly confused.

'It is true,' said she; 'I have not kept faith.

That's just like me; I am full of caprices. But I intend to go on some day or other— Look, the cloth covers it, all wet, so as to keep the clay moist.'

'And the accident? But, you know, we never believed in the accident.'

'You were wrong, then. I never lie. The bust fell down, flat. But the clay was fresh, and the misfortune was easily repaired. Look!'

She snatched away the cloth. There stood the Nabob with his jolly face, with that expression of happiness at being taken, so absolutely true and natural, that Paul could not help uttering a cry of admiration.

'Is not he well taken?' said she, naïvely. 'A few touches here and there.' She took up the boasting-tool and the little sponge, pushed the stand where there was yet a little light. 'It could be done in a couple of hours. But it could not go to the exhibition for all that. This is the 22nd; no packages are admitted now.'

'Nonsense, with interest——

She knitted her brow, and the wicked expression of her falling lips spoiled her face.

'True,' said she; 'the *protégé* of the Duke de Mora —— Oh! you need not defend yourself. I know what they say of me, and I care no more than that'—she sent a ball of clay sticking against the curtain. 'Perhaps, by dint of making ungrounded suppositions—— But let us leave those infamous lies,' said she, throwing back her little aristocratic head. 'I want to do you a pleasure, Minerva. Your friend shall be exhibited this year.'

Just then, a perfume of burnt sugar and baked paste invaded the studio, filled with the fine colourless dust of twilight; and the Fairy made her appearance, carrying a dish of fritters in her hand; a true fairy she looked, adorned, fresh and young-looking, dressed in a white overskirt, which left her beautiful arms bare, under their yellow lace. The arms have a beauty which passes last away.

'Look at my *kuchlen*, darling. Are not they nice? I beg pardon—I did not know you had company. Oh, it is Monsieur Paul! How are you, Monsieur Paul? Will you taste one of my cakes?'

And the amiable woman, so sprightly-looking in her toilet, came forward in little skips, holding her plate in equilibrium upon the tips of her fairy-fingers.

'Leave him alone,' said Felicia quietly. 'You will give him some at dinner.'

'At dinner?'

The dancer was so stupefied that she nearly dropped her pretty *soufflé* pastry.

'Yes, I keep him to dinner with us. Oh, I pray you,' said she entreatingly, seeing the young man was about to refuse, 'I pray you, do not say no. You will render me a real service if you stay this evening. Come, I granted you what you asked this evening, did I not?'

She took his hand. There was really something quite out of proportion between her re-

quest, and the entreating, anxious tone in which it was made. Paul was still hesitating. He was not dressed. How could she——? A dinner with company——

'My dinner? I countermand it! It does not matter to me. We shall be three, counting Constance.'

'But Felicia, my child, you don't think of it. And the—the other who will be here in a short time.'

'I'll write him a note, to tell him to stay at home.'

'It is too late.'

'Not at all. Six o'clock is striking. The dinner was for seven. You will send him this at once.'

She wrote hastily, on the corner of a table.

'What a strange girl, *mon Dieu!*' murmured the dancer, amazed, whilst Felicia, delighted, transfigured, shut her letter joyfully.

'Here is my excuse,' she said. 'Headaches have not been invented for Kadour.'

When the letter was gone:

'Oh, how happy I am! What a good evening we are going to pass together! Kiss me, Constance. We shall do honour to your *kuchlen*, be sure, and we shall have the pleasure of seeing you in a pretty toilet which will make you look younger than I.'

This was more than enough to obtain the dancer's pardon for that new caprice and the crime of quasi-treason to which she had just become an accomplice. Treat such a personage in so off-hand a manner! None but she in the world, none but she could do it! As for Paul, he had ceased to resist, caught again in the snares which he thought absence had broken, but which, on the very threshold of the studio, annihilated his will, and delivered him up vanquished and bound to the feeling he had made up his mind to struggle against.

The dinner—a truly dainty dinner, superintended by the Austrian lady in its least details—had evidently been prepared for a

guest of high rank. From the high seven-branched candelabrum of carved wood, which shone upon the embroidered table-cloth, down to the long-necked decanters enclosing the wines in their strange exquisite forms, the sumptuous service, the delicacy of the dishes, seasoned with a sprinkling of strangeness, everything revealed the importance of the expected guest, and the care that had been taken to please him; everything betokened an artist's dinner. The plate was scarce, but there were magnificent porcelain pieces, not sorted but yet apposite; old Rouen, rose-coloured Sèvres, Dutch crystals, mounted in old chiselled pewter, met upon this table as upon a shelf of rare curiosities, collected by a connoisseur for the satisfaction of his taste alone. There was a little disorder visible in the table service, which arose from the fact that it had been bought piece by piece, with no other guide than chance. The wonderful oil-cruet had lost its stopper, the broken salt-cellar let the salt fall by its breach on the

table-cloth. 'Hallo! what has become of the mustard-pot?' 'What has happened to this fork?' De Géry felt a little ashamed for his young hostess, who, on her part, did not seem to mind it at all.

There was one thing which made Paul more uneasy still; it was the desire to know what privileged guest he replaced at this table, who could be treated with so much magnificence and such an utter absence of ceremony at the same time. In spite of all, he felt his presence there, and that dismissed guest was offensive to his personal dignity. He tried in vain to forget him; everything recalled him, even the grand toilet of the Fairy, sitting opposite him with some of the grand airs with which she had provided herself beforehand for the solemn occasion. That thought troubled him and spoilt his joy.

On the other hand, as happens in all duets where the voices harmonise, he had never seen Felicia so affectionate, in so joyful a humour.

It was an almost childish overflow of merriness, the warm exuberance of spirits experienced when the danger is over, the reaction felt by the side of a clear-burning fire after the emotion of a wreck. She laughed and showed all her white teeth, teased Paul about his accent, and what she called his *bourgeois* ideas.

'For you are a frightful *bourgeois*, you know. But that's what I like in you.—Out of contradiction, no doubt, because I was born under a bridge, in a gust of wind —that's why I like quiet and reasonable people.'

'Oh, my dear, why do you try and make Monsieur Paul believe you were born under a bridge?' said the good Crenmitz, who could never get accustomed to the exaggeration of certain images, and always took everything literally.

'Let him believe what he likes, Fairy. I do not set my cap at him. I am sure he would not take that monster, called a female artist, for his

wife. Quite right, Minerva. Art is a despot; his devotees must give themselves up wholly to him. We put in our works all the ideal, the energy, the uprightness, the conscience that is in us, so that there is none left for the wear and tear of life; and when our work is over, art throws us down, exhausted and without compass, to be tossed about by all the waves, like dismasted pontoons.—A poor acquisition is a wife like that!'

'And yet,' the young man timidly ventured to say, 'I am inclined to think that art, exacting though it be, cannot alone monopolise woman. What is she to do with her heart, with that craving to love some one, to devote herself to some one—a craving which is in her far more than in us, the spring of all her actions?'

She remained sunk in her thoughts a few moments before she answered:

'You are perhaps right, wise Minerva. There are days when my life sounds terribly hollow. I feel depths and abysses in it.

Everything I throw into them, to fill them up, disappears. My finest fits of artistic enthusiasm engulf themselves in them and die off every time with a sigh. Then I think of marriage. Oh for a husband, for children—a whole covey of children—who would tumble about in the studio; a nest to feather for them all; the satisfaction of physical activity which art does not give; regular occupations, noise, singing, bursts of innocent merriment; all those things which would compel me to work and play—instead of wearying my thoughts in emptiness, in darkness, —to laugh when I felt my artistic self-love wounded, and to be nothing more than a satisfied mother, the day when the public shall have decreed that the artist in me is worn out and used up!'

Before that vision of love, the beauty of the young girl assumed an expression which Paul had never seen in her. It rapt him, and gave him a mad desire to carry away in his arms that beautiful wild bird, which dreamt

of the dove-cot, to defend it, shelter it in the secure love of an upright man.

But she, not looking at him, went on:

'I have not flown so far away as I seem to, believe me. Ask my good godmother there, if, when she put me into a boarding-school, I was not as regular, as well-disciplined as any other. But what a mess my life became afterwards! If you only knew what youth mine was, what precocious experience stained my mind, what confusion arose in my girlish judgment between what was lawful and what forbidden, between reason and folly! In the midst of that chaos, art alone stood—ever discussed, ever extolled—and I sought refuge in art. That is perhaps the reason why I shall never be anything but a mere artist, a woman unlike other women, a poor amazon, with a heart held prisoner in its steel breast-plate, rushing into the *mêlée* like a man, and condemned to live and die like a man.'

Why did not he say to her, then:

'Fair warrior, lay down your arms, put on the floating garment and the graces of the gynæceum. I love you, and oh! be my wife, to be happy, and make me happy too!'

Ah, that's it! He was afraid lest the other—you know, the man who was to dine there that evening, and whose shadow remained between them in spite of his absence—should hear him, and should have the right to scoff at him or pity him for that fine gush of feeling.

'Anyhow,' continued she, 'one thing I will swear, that if ever I have a daughter, I shall try and make a true woman of her, and not a poor abandoned one like me.—Oh! you know, Fairy, I don't say that for you. You were always good for your demon, full of care and affection.—Look at her, how pretty, how young she looks this evening.'

Flushed by the meal, beaming in the light, in a white dress, the reflections of which smoothed her wrinkles, Crenmitz, thrown back in her chair, held before her half-closed eyes a

glass of Château-Yquem, come from the neighbouring Moulin-Rouge; and her small rosy face, her floating dress reflected in the golden beverage, which, in return, threw back its warmth upon it, called back to the mind the Crenmitz of the olden time—not a bold creature, like the stars of our modern opera, but a natural unconscious woman, wrapped up in her comfort like a precious pearl in its enamelled shell. Felicia, who had made up her mind to be amiable to everybody that evening, set her gently on her recollections, made her relate once more her great triumphs as *Gisella*, as *Peri*—the ovations of the public, the visit of princes in her box, the present of Queen Amelia, made with such charming words. Those glorious recollections excited the poor Fairy, her eyes shone, her little feet wriggled under the table, as if seized with a dancing madness. Presently, when the dinner was over, and they had returned into the studio, Constance began to walk forward and backward,

to try a step, a caper—still talking, but interrupting herself to hum a ballet air, which she accompanied with a motion of her head; then all at once, she bent on her legs, and, with a spring, bounded to the other side of the studio.

'There, she is off!' whispered Felicia to de Géry. 'Look at her; it is worth while. You are going to see Crenmitz dance.'

It was charming and fairy-like. Imagine the large room bathed in shadow, and receiving no other light than that of the moon, which was seen through the window, rising in the clear sky—the deep-blue sky of night, a veritable opera sky. That was the background, upon which the outlines of the celebrated dancer stood in relief, white like a little airy cloud, and so light that she seemed to fly rather than bound. Then, standing on the tip of her toes, supported in the air by her extended arms only, her head thrown backwards, so that nothing of it was visible but her smile, she came quickly forward to the light, or receded with a small jerking

motion, so rapid that you expected every moment to hear the sound of broken window-panes, and to see her rise backward upon the long, sloping moonbeams which poured into the studio. What gave a peculiar charm, a strange poetry to that fantastic ballet, was the absence of music, the rhythmic measure, the light tapping of the falling feet, not louder than the fall of a dahlia's petals, dropping one by one on the floor. This lasted a few minutes; then they heard by her shortened breath that she was getting tired.

'Enough, enough. Sit down,' said Felicia.

Then did the little shadow stop on the edge of an armchair, and remain sitting there as if ready to start off again, smiling and panting, until, overcome by sleep, she began to rock herself, to wave to and fro, gently, keeping her pretty attitude, like a dragon-fly on a willow-twig, with its body dipping in water, and swinging in the stream.

Whilst they were looking at her, nodding in her armchair:

'Poor little Fairy!' said Felicia, 'she is the best, most serious friend, protector, and guardian I have had in life. It is that butterfly that has been my godmother. Can you now be astonished at the zigzags, the flights of my imagination? It is really lucky I did not go farther.'

Then, all at once, with a joyous burst:

'Ah! Minerva,' said she, 'you don't know how glad I am you came here this evening. You must not leave me so long again alone, do you hear? I have need of an honest mind like yours near me. I want to see a true face amidst the masks which surround me. But you are a frightful *bourgeois*, just the same,' added she, laughing, 'and a provincial into the bargain. No matter! It is still you I have the greatest pleasure to look at. I think my sympathy is owing to this: you remind me of one whom I once loved most dearly, a serious

and reasonable little woman, holding on firmly to the reality of life, but mixing with it that ideal which we artists reserve for our works alone. Some of the things you say seem to come from her. You have the same mouth of an antique mould. Is it that circumstance which gives such similarity to your words? I don't know, but you surely resemble each other. I'll show you.'

The table before which she sat, opposite him, was covered with sketches and albums. While talking, she began to draw, her head bent down, her curly, wildish hair shading her admirable little head. She was no longer the beautiful monster, lying with an anxious and gloomy countenance, passing condemnation on her own destiny, but a woman, a true woman, loving, displaying all her powers of seduction. And now, Paul was becoming forgetful of all his distrust, before so much frankness and grace. He was going to speak, to persuade. The moment was decisive. But

the door opened, and the little page appeared. The Duke was sending to inquire whether Mademoiselle's headache was not better?

'Just as bad,' she said angrily.

The page left the room. There was between the two a moment's silence, an icy coldness. Paul had risen. She went on with her sketch, her head still bending.

He walked a few steps up and down in the studio, came back to the table, and asked gently, rather astonished at feeling himself so calm:

'Was it the Duke de Mora who was to dine here?'

'Yes. I was *ennuyé*; I had the spleen. Such days are bad with me.'

'Was the Duchess to come with him?'

'The Duchess? I don't know her.'

'Well, if I were you I would never receive at my table a married man whose wife I did not know. You complain that you are abandoned. Why do you abandon yourself? When a woman is blameless, she must take care to

avoid suspicion.—Are you angry with me for speaking thus to you?'

'No, no. Scold me, Minerva. I like your moral. It, at all events, is upright and frank. It does not blink like that of Jenkins. I told you, I have need of a guide——'

She threw before him the sketch she had made.

'Look, that is the friend of whom I spoke. An affectionate and reliable friend whom I lost like the fool I am. In my moments of doubt, when I had a resolution to take, some sacrifice to make, I used to think of her, and say to myself: "What would she think?" just as, when doing some artistic work, we sometimes stop and think of some great master, to try and guess what advice he would give. You must be that for me, Paul. Will you?'

Paul did not answer. He was looking at Aline's portrait, for it was she—her pure profile, her chaffing but kind mouth, her long curl caressing her beautiful neck. Ah! all the Dukes de

Mora might come now. There was no more Felicia for him.

Poor Felicia! Endowed with superior talents, she was like those magicians who can bind or loosen the destinies of men, without having any power to attain happiness for themselves.

'Will you give me that sketch?' he whispered with a trembling voice.

'With pleasure. She is pretty, is she not? Well, listen; if ever you meet her—love her, marry her. She is better than all other women. But yet, if not her—if not her——'

And the beautiful, tame sphinx, raised towards him her large tearful and laughing eyes; but this time her riddle had nothing mysterious or undecipherable in it.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXHIBITION.

'MAGNIFICENT!'

'A stupendous success! Barye never did anything so fine!'

'And the Nabob's bust? It is marvellous! Look at Constance Crenmitz, how happy she looks! See her trot away.'

'What! is that little old woman in an ermine mantle Constance Crenmitz? I thought her dead these twenty years.'

Not at all dead, quite the contrary. The triumph of her god-daughter, who takes the lead among successful artists, delights her, makes her feel younger. She goes about among the crowd of artists and fashionable people, who form, at the two places where Felicia's works

are exhibited, two masses of black backs and light dresses, pressing against each other almost to stifling, in order to get a better look. Constance, usually so timid, glides as far as the first row of beholders; listens to the remarks made, catches scraps of phrases as they fly about, sentences which she remembers, approves with a nod, smiles, shrugs her shoulders when she hears some stupid criticism, and is almost tempted to annihilate anyone who fails to admire.

Such a person, be it our good Crenmitz or any other, you will always meet at the opening of the *Salon*, always wearing the same furtive look, prowling around the chattering groups with an anxious face, an attentive ear. Sometimes that person is an old gentleman, a father, who thanks you with a look for a kindly word spoken in passing, or whose face takes an expression of despair when an epigram, shot at a work of art, strikes his anxious heart behind. Such a face deserves to be handed down to posterity, and would be too, if ever a painter, fond of

modern subjects, thought of fixing on his canvas that typical manifestation of Parisian life, viz.: the opening of an exhibition in that huge conservatory of sculpture, with its sanded avenues, its immense glass roof, under which stand in bold relief, half way up, the galleries of the first story, full of bending wondering heads, and of improvised floating draperies.

In the rather cold, pale light, reflected by the green curtains hung all round—a light purposely mellowed, one would think, to induce sound and thoughtful criticism—the crowds move slowly to and fro, stop, scatter themselves about, on benches, in thick groups, mixing the different 'worlds' better than any other assembly. Just as, at this time of the year, the fickle and changing season mixes all attires, and brings in rustling contact the black lace and imperial train of the high born lady who has come to see what effect her portrait produces, and the Siberian furs of an actress just returned from Russia, who insists on proclaiming that fact by her presence here.

Here are no side or front boxes, no reserved

seats; and it is that circumstance which gives such a charm of curiosity to the opening of an exhibition in the full light of day. The women of the best society may appreciate here, after close inspection, the painted beauties so much admired in the blaze of foot-lights. The small last-fashion bonnets of Marchionesses of Bois-Landry come across the humble dress of some artist's wife or daughter; and the model, who sat for that splendid Andromeda which you noticed near the entrance, passes triumphantly in her short petticoat and wretched vestments thrown over her beautiful form with all the spurious folds of fashion. The people here watch, admire, and malign each other; they exchange scornful or searching looks, they stop suddenly on the passage of some celebrity, of that illustrious critic whom we can almost fancy we see even now, tranquil and majestic, his powerful head surrounded by long hair, going round the exhibition, and followed by some ten young disciples, attentive to his kind and authoritative remarks. The noise of voices

is lost in that immense building, sonorous only under the two arches which lead in and out; but the faces acquire an astonishing intensity, a relief full of concentrated motion and animation, chiefly in the vast recess where the buffet stands, filled to overflow with a gesticulating crowd, and where the women's bonnets and the servants' aprons shine brilliantly on the background of the men's sombre clothing. The same impression is produced in the long central avenue, where the swarming masses of visitors contrast with the immobility of the exhibited statues and the hardly noticeable shiver which runs along their clayey-white forms and their ecstatic movements.

Look, here are wings congealed in the act of motion; then, a globe, supported by four allegorical figures, whose turning attitudes vaguely remind you of a waltzing rhythm—a poised *ensemble*, which awakens admirably the idea of the earth whirling away into space—arms raised as if for a signal, bodies starting up

heroically, and representing an allegory, a symbol.—They look as if, struck dead in the act of motion, they were now endowed with immortality, restored to history, to legend, to the ideal world of museums, where the curiosity or admiration of nations may do them reverence.

Although Felicia's bronze group did not possess the dimensions of those great works, its exceptional merits had, nevertheless, been acknowledged by the place awarded to it—one of the central *ronds-points*, or cross-roads, where a crowd, standing at a respectful distance, and looking over the hedge of guards and policemen, stared at the Bey of Tunis and suite, in their long burnous, with sculptural folds, which made them appear like so many living statues surrounding the marble ones.

The Bey, who had arrived in Paris a few days before, and who was the lion of all 'first nights,' had desired to witness the opening of the Exhibition. He was 'an enlightened prince,' 'a patron of art'; he possessed at the

Bardo a wonderful gallery of Turkish pictures, and chromo-lithographs of all the battles of the First Empire. The sight of the big Arab greyhound had caught his attention from the entrance.

Yes, that was a true *sloogui*, the sloogui of his country, the companion of all his hunts, with its fine, muscular limbs. He laughed in his black beard; he stroked the back of the animal, its muscles; it seemed as if he wished to excite it still more. But the finely-shaped animal, the beast of prey, ardent in love and hunting, doubly drunk, its eyes glaring, its nostrils open, its teeth shining, all its limbs stretched and indefatigable in their steel-like elasticity, seemed already to touch its prey, to lick it with the tip of its hanging tongue, and to sharpen its teeth with a ferocious *rictus*. If you only looked at it, you felt inclined to say: 'He has it.' But a glance at the fox sufficed to reassure you. With its velvety shiny crupper, its feline look, skimming the ground

without effort, you felt it had a charmed life. It turned, while running, its fine head and pointed ears, towards the hound, with an expression of ironical security which clearly told the gift it had received from the gods.

Whilst an Inspector of Fine Arts, who had hastened forward, his official gear all awry, his head bald to his very back, was explaining to Mohamed the apologue of the 'Dog and Fox,' as written in the catalogue, with the legend: 'It so happened that they met,' and this remark: 'Bought by the Duke de Mora,' our stout friend Hemerlingue, blowing and perspiring by the side of His Highness, had a good deal to do to explain to him that this masterpiece of sculpture was the work of the fair rider he had seen the day before at the Bois. How could a woman, with her feeble hands, thus soften the hard bronze, and give it the appearance of living flesh? Of all Paris wonders, this was the most wonderful! He, therefore, inquired of the functionary

whether there was not anything else of the same artist to be seen?

'Yes, monseigneur; another *chef-d'œuvre*. If Your Highness will kindly come this way, I will lead you.'

The Bey resumed his walk with his suite. They were all admirable types—chiselled features and pure lineaments—a warm paleness, the light of which was absorbed in the whiteness of their haïcks. Magnificently robed, they contrasted with the busts that stood on two rows along the avenue they had taken. These busts, perched on their high stands, puny-looking in the empty air—now that they were away from the studio, from the surroundings where they recalled great labour, a tender affection, a well-filled and courageous existence—had the sad look of people who have lost their way and are rather ashamed to find themselves where they are. With the exception of two or three busts of women, with rich shoulders covered with petrified lace and marble head-dresses,

expressed with that dash which gives them the lightness of powdered *coiffures*—of a few children's profiles with simple lines, where the polished stone looks like the moisture of life—all the rest were nothing but wrinkles, furrows, crispations and grimaces, expressing excess of work and motion, nervousness and fever: the opposite of that sculptural art, meant to convey an idea of repose and of serene beauty.

At least the plainness of the Nabob was stamped with energy; he had the bold, caddish look of an adventurer, and that expression of goodness so well rendered by the artist, who had taken the precaution of deepening her plaster with a layer of ochre, and had thereby given it the sunburnt and swarthy complexion of her model. When the Arabs saw it they uttered a low exclamation: 'Bou-Said!' (Father of happiness). That was the surname by which the Nabob went in Tunis, the label, so to speak, of his luck. The Bey, thinking they had wished to mystify him by taking him

before the hated mercanti, looked suspiciously at the inspector:

'Jansoulet?' he asked with his guttural voice.

'Yes, your Highness, Bernard Jansoulet, the new *député* for Corsica.'

This time, the Bey turned loweringly to Hemerlingue:

'*Député?*'

'Yes, your Highness, since this morning, but there is nothing settled yet.'

And the banker, raising his voice, added stammeringly:

'A French Chamber will never admit that adventurer in their number.'

No matter! a blow had been dealt to the blind confidence of the Bey in his financial Baron. He had so confidently affirmed that the other would never be elected, that they could act freely and fearlessly against him; and now, instead of the helpless man with a tarnished reputation, behold! a representative

of the nation stood before him, a *député*, whose stone effigy the Parisians came here to admire! For an Oriental there is necessarily an idea of honour allied to such a public exhibition, and that bust had the prestige of a statue erected on a square.

Yellower still than usual, Hemerlingue inwardly cursed himself for his awkwardness and imprudence; but how could he have suspected such a thing as that? He had been assured that the bust was not finished. Indeed, it had only been brought there that morning; it seemed to like its place, looked full of proud satisfaction, and appeared to sneer at its enemies with a jolly smile on its curled lip. This was truly a silent revenge for the disaster of Saint Romans.

For a few minutes, the Bey, as cold and passionless as the sculptured figure itself, fixed his eyes upon it without uttering a single word—a straight furrow dividing his brow, on which his courtiers alone could read his anger—then

after two words rapidly spoken in Arabic to order the carriages and gather his scattered suite, he walked with dignified gravity towards the door, without looking at anything else. Who can say what passes in those august brains, *blasé* with absolute power? Already our Western sovereigns have incomprehensible fancies, but that is nothing compared to the whims of Eastern despots. The Inspector of Fine Arts, who had expected to show His Highness through the exhibition, and to gain by that walk the pretty red-and-green ribbon of the Nisham-Iftikahr, never knew the secret of this sudden flight. At the very moment when the white haïcks were disappearing under the porch, and just in time to catch a glimpse of their last folds floating away, the Nabob came in by the central entrance. That morning he had received the news: 'Elected by an overwhelming majority;' and after a Sardanapalian breakfast, in which the new Corsican *député* had been well toasted, he came with a few of

his guests to show himself, to see his bust, and to enjoy the plenitude of his new glory.

The first person whom he saw on arriving was Felicia Ruys, standing and leaning against the pedestal of a statue, surrounded by men who were congratulating, and doing homage to, her. The Nabob hastened to join his voice to theirs.

She was simply dressed in a black costume, bordered and trimmed with jet. The severity of her toilette was therefore relieved by the light which the beads reflected, and by the freshness of her delightful little bonnet of ostrich feathers, which harmonised with the fine frizzly hair around her forehead and the wavy curls which divided the back, to such a degree, that the hair seemed a continuation of the fluffiness of the feathers.

A crowd of artists and men of the world pressed eagerly forward before so much genius joined to such perfect beauty.

Jenkins, bare-headed, gushing with warm protestations, went from one to the other, re-

cruiting suffrages, but widening the circle around that young celebrity, whose guardian and corypheus he was fain to become.

His wife, meanwhile, was talking to the young girl. Poor Madame Jenkins! he had whispered to her with that cold cruel voice, which she alone knew: 'You must go and congratulate Felicia,' and she had gone, stifling her feelings; for she knew, now, what things lay hidden behind that paternal affection, although she avoided an explanation with the Doctor as if she dreaded the consequences.

After Madame Jenkins it is the Nabob who presents himself, and who, taking in his big paws the two long well-gloved hands of the artist, expresses his gratitude in a frank outburst which brings tears into his own eyes:

'It is a great honour you have done me, Mademoiselle, in associating my name with yours, and my humble person to your triumphant success. You prove thereby to all those vermin who are gnawing at my heels that

you do not believe the slander which they spread about me. Indeed, I shall never forget this. When I have covered this magnificent bust with gold and diamonds, I shall still be in your debt.'

Happily for the good Nabob, who feels more strongly than he can express, he is obliged to make room for all those who are attracted by this brilliant talent, this popular artist: frantic enthusiasts who, unable to find words to express themselves, disappear as they came; worldly admirers, full of goodwill, moved by a strong desire to please, but whose every word falls like a douche of cold water; rivals and brother artists who shake hands with great energy, some cordially indeed, but others with such a nerveless grasp that they leave behind the flabbiness of their impress; a tall pretentious simpleton, whose idiotic praise might, he thinks, give you too much pleasure, and who therefore mixes with it, lest it should spoil you, the proverbial 'grain of salt'; another who, in congratulating

you, proves to you that you do not understand the first letter of your art; and, lastly, the busybody, who stops just long enough to whisper in your ear that 'So-and-so, the famous critic, does not seem satisfied.' Felicia listened to all this, unmoved, exalted by her success above the littleness of envy, and quite proud whenever a glorious veteran, some old companion of her father, dropped a 'Very well, little one,' which carried her back into the past, to that little corner formerly set apart for her in the paternal studio, at the time she was beginning to cut into the fame of the great Ruys a little glory for herself. In reality, all these congratulations left her somewhat cold, because there was one, more desirable than all the others, which she was astonished at not having yet received. . . . Yes, she thought of him more than she had ever thought of any other man. Was this love, then, the great love, so rare in an artist's soul, incapable as it is of giving itself up entirely to feeling? or was it

the mere desire of living an honest and commonplace life, well sheltered against *ennui*—that horrid *ennui*, the precursor of tempests, and which she was so right to dread? At all events, if it was an illusion, she was herself mistaken in it, and had for some days enjoyed its delightful emotions; for love is so beautiful and strong, that its mere counterfeit, its mirage, deceives us, and has the power to move us as much as love itself.

Did it ever happen to you, when walking in the street, your mind engaged about one, whose image is enshrined in your heart, to be suddenly warned of his approach by the presence of some persons who bear a vague resemblance to the absent one—premonitory images, sketches of the type about to appear, which issue from the crowd like successive appeals to your excited attention? We should not laugh at those magnetic and nervous impressions, because they constitute a power to suffer. Already in the swelling and ever-

renewed sea of visitors, Felicia had thought several times that she recognised the curly head of Paul de Géry, when all at once she uttered an exclamation of delight. Yet it was not he, but somebody who resembled him much, whose regular and placid countenance ever mixed itself now with that of friend Paul in her mind, owing to a resemblance, moral rather than physical, and the same gentle authority which they both exercised over her thoughts.

'Aline!'

'Felicia!'

There is nothing more problematic than the friendship of two women who share the queenship which society confers on beauty, even though they lavish on each other flattering epithets, and the pretty graceful ways of feminine affection. On the other hand, affections contracted in childhood preserve in woman a freedom of demeanour which distinguishes them and causes them to be known among all others;

they are bonds innocently but strongly woven, just like those pieces of needlework sewn by the inexperienced hands of little girls, full of stitches and knots, or like plants grown in virgin soil, full of blossoms and of strong roots, full of sap and of green shoots. How happy when, hand in hand—dancing rings of the boarding-school, where are you?—they can, evoking common souvenirs, retrace their steps with an equal knowledge of the way and of its minute incidents, and with the same feeling laugh! Standing a little apart from the crowd, the two young girls, who, at the first sight they caught of each other, have forgotten a five years' estrangement, exchange greetings and recollections, whilst little Monsieur Joyeuse, his red face lighted by a new white tie, draws himself up proudly, on seeing his daughter made so much of by a celebrated woman. And he is right to be proud; for that little Parisian girl, even when she stands by the side of her brilliant friend, beams with gracefulness, youth, and candour, with her twenty downy

and golden years, which the joy of meeting has ripened into a bouquet of fresh flowers.

'How happy you must be! I have not yet seen anything; but I hear everybody say it is very beautiful.'

'I am above all happy to see you again, dear Aline. It is so long since——'

'It is indeed, you naught—— But whose fault ——?'

And in the deepest recess of her memory, Felicia finds that the date of her last visit coincides with another date, when her youth withered in a scene never to be forgotten.

'And what have you done, darling, since that time?'

'Who, I? Always the same thing. Nothing to speak of.'

'Yes, I know what it is you call doing nothing, you brave little girl. It is sacrificing yourself for others, is it not?'

But Aline was not listening any more. She smiled straight before her; and Felicia, turning

round to see whom that smile went to, perceived Paul de Géry, who was returning the discreet and tender greeting of Mademoiselle Joyeuse.

'What! you know each other?'

'Know Monsieur Paul? I should think so, indeed. We often speak of you. Did he never tell you?'

'Never! He is terribly sly——

She suddenly stopped short, her mind lighted up by a thought; and rapidly, without heeding de Géry, who was approaching to congratulate her on her success, she bent to Aline, and whispered to her. The latter blushed, defended herself with a smile, with low-spoken words: 'You don't think of it! At my age, a grandmamma——!' And she seized her father's arm to escape some friendly joke.

When Felicia had watched the two young people going away together, when she had thoroughly realised what they did not know themselves, namely, that they loved one another, she experienced the sensation of a tremendous

fall within her. It was her dream that had crumbled down into a thousand fragments, over which she began to crample furiously: 'Well, after all, he was right to prefer that little Aline. Would an honest man ever dare to marry Mademoiselle Ruys? She, a home, a family! Nonsense! . . . You are a courtesan's daughter, my dear. If you want to be anything, you must be a courtesan yourself.'

The day was fast waning. A more stirring crowd, with empty spaces here and there, was beginning to flow out by the archway, with an occasional eddy round the successful works of the year, glutted, tired, but nevertheless excited by that atmosphere laden with art electricity. A grand blaze of the sun—the four o'clock sun—lighted the stained glass of the rose-window, and strewed the sandy avenues with the colours of a rainbow, gently rising on the bronze or marble statues, covering their beautiful naked limbs with many hues, and filling the vast repository with the variegated life of a garden.

Felicia, sunk in a deep and melancholy reverie, did not see him who was approaching her —magnificent, elegant, fascinating—through the crowd which opened respectfully as the name of 'Mora' was everywhere whispered.

'Well! Mademoiselle, this is a splendid success for you. I only regret one thing, the wicked symbol which lies hidden in your *chef d'œuvre.*'

On seeing the Duke before her, she shuddered.

'Ah! yes; the symbol!' said she, raising towards him a disheartened smile; and leaning against the side of a great voluptuous statue near which she stood, she murmured very low, very low indeed, her eyes shut, like a woman who gives or abandons herself:

'Rabelais is a liar like other men. The truth is, the fox is exhausted, breathless, despairing, and nearly falling into the ditch; and if the greyhound persists ——'

Mora trembled with emotion, grew a little

paler; all his blood rushed back to his heart. Two jets of sombre fire flashed from their eyes; two words were rapidly whispered; and the Duke, bowing deeply, moved away with winged steps, as if the gods were bearing him.

There was, at that moment, but one man in the palace as happy as he. That man was the Nabob. Surrounded by his friends, he seemed to hold, and fill up alone, the long avenue, speaking aloud, gesticulating, so happy that he almost looked handsome; as if, in his long, naïve contemplation of his own bust, he had received from it a little of that splendid idealisation which the artist had thrown like a glory around the vulgarity of his type.

His head, three-quarters raised, rising boldly out of his broad open collar, attracted the notice of the visitors, and provoked contradictory remarks respecting the resemblance; so that the name of Jansoulet, repeated so many times in the electoral ballot-boxes, was re-echoed now by the prettiest mouths and the most powerful

voices of Paris. Any other man than the Nabob would have been put out, on hearing those exclamations of the curious, which were far from being always kind. But the platform, the springing-board, seemed to suit the nature of this man, who really felt braver under the glare of men's eyes—like certain women who are witty and beautiful in society only, and whom the slightest token of admiration transfigures and perfects.

When his delirious joy was becoming assuaged, when he thought he had drunk to the last drop the cup of inebriating pride, he had only to say to himself: '*Député!* I am a *député*!' and the triumphant beverage foamed again to overflowing. To be a *député* meant the embargo taken off all his property, it meant awaking out of a two months' nightmare, it meant the blast of the mistral sweeping away all his troubles, all his uneasiness, down to the affront of Saint-Romans, with all the crushing weight it left in his memory.

Député!

He laughed aloud as he thought of the Baron's face on learning the news, of the Bey's stupefaction in front of his bust; and suddenly, at the idea that he was no longer a mere adventurer steeped in gold and exciting the stupid admiration of the crowd, like an enormous nugget in the shop-front of a money-changer, but that, wherever he passed, the people saw in him one of the elect of the national will, his good-natured, simple, and expressive face tried to assume a certain gravity. He conceived plans for the future, plans of reform, and a desire to take to heart the lessons which fate had lately given him. Already, remembering the promise he had made to de Géry, he showed to the hungry pack which wriggled sordidly under his heel, a certain disdainful coldness, a resolution to assert himself. He mentally called the Marquis de Bois-Landry 'my good fellow,' sternly reproved the Governor whose enthusiasm was becoming scandalous, and swore

to himself that he would soon get rid of all that mendicant and compromising crew. Suddenly a good opportunity offered itself to him to begin the premeditated execution.

Piercing the crowd, Moëssard, handsome Moëssard—pale and puffy, in a light-blue cravat, and a fashionable frock-coat—seeing that the Nabob, after having gone twenty times round the sculpture room, was now advancing to the door, rushed towards him, and passing his arm under his:

'You take me with you, you know.'

In the latter times it was, during the electoral period, that he had chiefly assumed, in the Place Vendôme, an authority almost equal to, though far more impudent than, that of Monpavon; for in impudence the queen's lover had not his equal upon the footpaths between the Rue Drouot and the Madeleine. For once, however, he was not in luck. The muscular arm which he pressed shook him off violently, and the Nabob answered him dryly:

'Sorry, my friend; but I have no room for you in my carriage.'

No room in a carriage as big as a house, and which had brought five of them to the exhibition!

Moëssard looked at him speechless with amazement.

'I had a few words to say about an urgent affair,' said he. 'It is with respect to my note. You received it, did you not?'

'I did; and Monsieur de Géry must have answered it this morning. What you ask is impossible. Twenty thousand francs! A big lump, by Jove!'

'But I think my services——' stammered the insipid fellow.

'Have been well paid for; so think I. Two hundred thousand francs in five months! We will stop there, if you please. You have long claws, young man—they must be pared.'

They were walking, as they spoke, carried

onward by the sea of people towards the egress. Moëssard stopped.

'Is that your last word?'

The Nabob hesitated one moment, seized by an evil foreboding before that wicked, pale mouth. But remembering his promise to his friend:

'It is my last word,' he said.

'Well, then! we shall see,' said handsome Moëssard, whose switch cleft the air with the hissing of a viper; and turning on his heels, he walked hurriedly off, like a man who is expected somewhere on urgent business. Jansoulet continued his triumphant march. On that day it would have required a good deal to disturb the equilibrium of his happiness. Nay, he felt rather pleased with the work he had so sharply done. The immense vestibule was filled with a compact crowd who were hastening to leave, as the hour for closing approached, but who were kept under the porch, on the well-trodden and sandy ground, by one of those

sudden showers which seem to be part of the programme on the opening day. The whole aspect was curious, thoroughly Parisian, and reminded one of the entrance to the circus, where dandies in full dress are wont to congregate.

Outside, the long sunbeams crossing the rain made the limpid fillets shine like sharp and brilliant blades, so that the proverb 'it rains halberds' was fully justified. The young verdure of the Champs Elysées, the clumps of rhododendrons, rustling and dripping, the carriages standing in rows along the avenue, the coachmen's waterproofs, the splendid harness of horses, to which the water and the sun gave an increase of brilliancy and dash, and the blue colour reflected by every object—that blue of a sky about to smile between two showers—such was the prospect outside!

Within, bursts of laughter, gossipings, greetings, fits of impatience, skirts turned up, puffy silks on the small tucked petticoats, the light-coloured stripes of silk stockings, and abundance

of fringes, lace, and flounces, held up like heavy parcels in one hand, and all crumpled! Then, to connect the two sides of the picture, the visitors, held prisoners under the arch of the porch, in the obscurity of its shadow, with an immense background of light. Then again, footmen running under their umbrellas, names of coachmen and masters called out, carriages approaching with a slow step, and couples getting into them in disarray.

'Monsieur Jansoulet's carriage?'

Everybody turned to look at him; but, you know, he was not the man to mind that. Whilst the good Nabob, in the midst of these elegant women, these illustrious men, all Paris in fact—at least all who had a name—showed off a little, as he stood waiting for his servants, a nervous and well-gloved hand was held out to him, and the Duke de Mora, who was going to his carriage, addressed him in passing with that good nature which happiness imparts to the most reserved:

'Allow me to congratulate you, my dear *Député!*'

This was said in a loud voice, and every one could hear it. 'My dear *Député!*'

There is, in the life of all men, a golden hour, a luminous peak, where all the prosperity, the joys and triumphs which they can hope for await, and are granted to, them. That peak is more or less high, more or less rugged and difficult to climb; but it nevertheless is there for all, for the humble as well as for the powerful. But even as there is one day in the year, when the sun runs its longest career, and the morrow of which seems like the first step towards winter, so that summit of human happiness is but one moment to cull, after which we can only descend.

That peak, the Nabob had reached at four o'clock in the afternoon of the 1st of May—that hour streaked with rain and sunshine. Remember it, poor man, and for ever fix its evanescent brilliancy in thy memory. It was the hour of

thy mature summer, with the flowers in bloom, with the fruit bending their golden branches, with the ripe harvest which thy spendthrift hand scattered about. Thy star is now about to pale, by degrees receding and setting, unable soon to pierce the dismal night in which thy destiny is to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER VI.

MEMOIRS OF AN OFFICE PORTER.

THERE was a great fête last Saturday at the Place Vendôme. To celebrate his election, Monsieur Bernard Jansoulet, the new *député* for Corsica, gave a splendid party, with mounted police at the door, all the mansion illuminated, and two thousand invitations scattered amongst the best society.

To the distinction of my manners, to my fine sonorous voice, which the Chairman of the Board had been able to appreciate at the meetings of the *Caisse Territoriale*, I owed it to be present at that sumptuous *soirée*, where for three whole hours, standing in the antechamber, in the midst of flowers and hangings, dressed in scarlet and gold, with that majesty peculiar to

stoutish persons, exhibiting my calves in their stockings for the first time in my life, I fired away, like a cannon-shot, through the fine *salons en suite*, the name of each guest, which a brilliant Swiss emphasised each time with the 'bang' of his halberd upon the floor.

What curious observations I was enabled to make that evening; what pleasant sallies, what highly-seasoned jokes, passed among serving men, respecting all those gents as they made their appearance! It is certainly not among the vine-dressers of Montbars that I could have heard such good things. I should mention that worthy Monsieur Barreau had previously put us all in good humour by treating us, in the servants' hall, filled up to the ceiling with iced drinks and victuals, to a splendid luncheon, strongly washed down at the time, and kept moist, during the evening, by glasses of punch and champagne, whisked off as the trays were brought back from the *salons*.

But the gentry did not seem to be so well

disposed as we were. At nine o'clock, on arriving at my post, I was struck by the uneasy, excited appearance of the Nabob, whom I saw walking about with Monsieur de Géry, in the middle of the lighted and deserted *salons*, talking excitedly and with violent gestures.

'I shall kill him,' he said; 'yes, I shall kill him!'

The other tried to soothe him; then Madame came in, and they spoke of something else.

A splendid woman, that Levantine, to be sure; twice as stout as I am, dazzling to behold with her diamond diadem, the jewels with which her enormous white shoulders were laden, her back as round as her chest, her waist encircled in a gold and green breastplate, which continued downwards in long stripes along her stiff skirt. Never have I seen anything so imposing, so rich. She looked like one of those fine white elephants with towers on their backs, of which we are told in books of travels. Whenever she walked, heavily,

leaning upon the furniture, all her flesh trembled, and her ornaments gave a metallic sound. Add to that a thin, shrieking voice, and a fine red face, which a little nigger kept cooling all the time with a fan of white feathers, as large as a peacock's tail, and you have her exact portrait.

It was the first time that this lazy and savage person showed herself in Parisian society, and Monsieur Jansoulet seemed very happy and proud that she had deigned to preside at his *fête*. But this cannot have given the lady much trouble; for, leaving her husband in the first room, she passed into the Japanese *salon*, and stretched herself upon a couch, wedged in between two piles of cushions, and remained perfectly motionless; so that she looked, away in the distance, more like an idol than a woman, under the big fan which her negro waved with the regularity of machinery. Those foreign women have a coolness——!

The irritation of the Nabob had struck me, and seeing his valet go down the stairs,

four at a time, I caught hold of him as he passed, and whispered into his ear:

'What is the matter with your master, Monsieur Noël?'

'It is the article in the *Messager*,' he answered me. I could not learn more for the time; for a loud ring signalled the first carriage, which was soon after followed by lots of others.

My mind wholly engrossed by my duty, directing all my attention to the proper calling of the names which were given to me, trying to make them *ricocher* from *salon* to *salon*, I thought of nothing else. It is no easy matter, mind you, to announce properly persons who, thinking that their names ought to be well-known, mumble them between their teeth as they pass; who afterwards are astonished that you have murdered the said names in the finest style, and are almost angry with you because their entrance is a failure, and they have awakened a little smile only, where they

expected admiration. Here, at Monsieur Jansoulet's, what rendered my task a harder one still, was the crowd of foreigners, Turks, Egyptians, Persians, Tunisians. I do not speak of Corsicans, who were also very numerous, because, during my four years' stay at the *Territoriale*, I had become accustomed to pronounce those sonorous, endless names, ever followed by that of the locality they come from: 'Paganetti da Porto Vecchio, Bastelica da Bonifaccio, Païanatchi da Barbicaglia.'

I took great pleasure in modulating those Italian syllables with all their sonority, and I well saw, by the wondering looks of those good islanders, how surprised and delighted they were to be introduced in this fashion into the highest Continental society. But with the Turks, Pashas, Beys, and Effendis, my difficulty was greater, and I must often have mispronounced their names; for Monsieur Jansoulet sent me two consecutive messages to pay greater attention to the names, and above all to announce

them in a simpler way. The latter observation, made with a loud voice before the servants in the ante-chamber, with a certain harshness of manner and tone, annoyed me much, and prevented me—shall I confess it?—from feeling any pity for that big *parvenu*, when I heard, during the evening, what cruel thorns had got into his bed of roses.

From half-past ten to twelve o'clock, the bell never ceased to ring, the carriages never ceased to roll under the porch, nor the guests to pour in one after the other—*députés*, senators, state-councillors, town-councillors. Somehow, they looked more like a meeting of shareholders than a party of fashionable people. What was that owing to? I could not account for it; but a word from the Swiss Nicklauss opened my eyes.

'Do you notice, Monsieur Passajon,' said that good servant to me, as he stood facing me, his halberd in his hand, 'do you notice how few ladies we have here?'

That was it, by the powers! And we

were not the only two to notice it, either. With every new-comer, I heard the Nabob, who remained standing near the door, exclaim in dismay, with his thick, husky Marseillais voice:

'What! alone?'

The guest apologised in a low voice—'mn . . . mn . . . mn . . . his lady a little indisposed—regretted very much indeed—' Whereupon another came, and the same question brought the same answer.

By dint of always hearing those words, 'What! alone?' we at last began to make a joke of it among us servants. Chasseurs and footmen repeated it to one another whenever a new guest arrived: 'What! alone?' And we laughed, and enjoyed the fun. But Monsieur Nicklauss, with his great usage of society, found that nearly general absence of the fair sex not at all natural.

'It must be owing to the article in the *Messager*,' said he.

Everybody spoke of that confounded article;

and as they stood before the flower-framed mirror where each guest cast a glance before going in, I caught scraps of conversation, whispered in a style somewhat similar to the following:

'Have you read?'

'It is absolutely frightful.'

'Is such a thing possible?'

'I don't know; but, in the meantime, I did not think proper to bring my wife.'

'Just like me. A man may go anywhere without compromising himself ——'

'Certainly. Whereas a woman——'

Then they went in, their opera hats under their arms, with that conquering look of married men who have left their wives behind.

What then was in that paper, in that article, which undermined to such a degree the influence of so rich a man? Unfortunately my duty kept me upstairs, and I could not go down to the servants' hall to obtain information, talk with the coachmen, the footmen, the chasseurs, whom I saw standing at the foot of

the stairs, amusing themselves by scoffing at the people who were coming up. What else could you expect? Masters are such bullies. Is it possible to keep from laughing, when you see a Marquis and a Marchioness of Bois-Landry brush past with their insolent looks and empty stomachs, after all we know of Monsieur's doings and Madame's toilets? And the Jenkinses, so loving, so united, the Doctor full of attention and care, wrapping his lady in a lace shawl, lest she should catch cold on the staircase; and she, smiling, and dressed up in velvet, with a train as long as that, and leaning on her husband's arm with a look which seemed to say 'How nice and comfortable I am'—when I know, that since the death of his true, legitimate, Irish wife, the Doctor thinks of little else than getting rid of his old hag to marry a blooming girl, and that the said old hag passes her nights in tormenting herself, and destroying with her tears whatever scraps of beauty she has left.

The best of the joke is that not one of

those persons for a moment suspected the good jests and jeers which accompanied them on their way up, never knew what dirt their trains gathered on the carpet of the vestibule—and they put on disdainful looks which were enough to make you split with laughter!

The two ladies I have just mentioned, the governor's wife (a little Corsican woman with thick eyebrows, white teeth, shiny cheeks, which seemed black under the skin, and gave her the appearance of an Auvergnat woman freshly scrubbed—a good creature though, always laughing except when her husband looks at other women); a few Levantines with gold or pearl diadems, not so well got up as our own Levantine, but still in the same style; some upholsterers', jewellers', and tradesmen's wives, with shoulders as broad as shop-fronts, and very stuffily dressed; lastly a few of the *Territoriale employés*' better-halves, with wretched dresses and empty pockets—these were all the representatives of the fair sex present at the party,

about thirty women in all, lost amongst a thousand black-coats. You might as well say at once there were none. Every now and then Cassagne, Laporte, Grandvarlet, who handed the refreshments round, kept us informed of what was going on in the *salons*.

'Ah! my boys, if you only saw that! The scene is gloomy and dismal in the extreme. The men don't leave the buffets, the ladies are all in the back room, sitting in a circle, and fanning themselves without opening their mouths. The big woman speaks to nobody. I think she is having a nap. You should see Monsieur, what a face he is pulling! Come, old Passajon, a glass of Château-Larose, it will keep you awake.'

All those young men were charming in their behaviour towards me, and took a knavish pleasure in doing me the honours of the cellar so often and in such full bumpers, that my tongue was becoming thick and my utterance uncertain, and as those young people expressed

it in their free and easy way: 'Uncle, you are talking twaddle.' It was lucky that the last Effendi had just arrived, and that there were no new-comers to announce; for, in spite of all my efforts to the contrary, whenever I went between the hangings to fling a name at the company, I saw the chandeliers whirl round with hundreds of thousands of flickering lights, and the floor, from appearing to be a slippery slope, rose up perpendicular before my eyes like *montagnes russes.* I could not help talking twaddle, that's certain.

The sharp night air, a good wash under the pump in the yard, soon rid me of that small discomfort, and when I came back to the vestibule I felt as fresh as a rose. Here I found a numerous and merry company round a champagne *marquise*, of which all my nieces, trimmed in their best, with puffed-out hair and pink neck-ribbons, took their shares, in spite of their exclamations and delightful little grimaces which deceived nobody. Naturally they spoke of the

famous newspaper article, Moëssard's article, full of frightful revelations, it appears, on all sorts of disgraceful trades which the Nabob had carried on, some fifteen or twenty years ago, when he first came to Paris.

This was the third attack of the same kind which the *Messager* had published within a week, and that rogue of a Moëssard had the cunning to send the paper by post to the Place Vendôme.

Monsieur Jansoulet received that in the morning with his chocolate; and, at the same hour, his friends and enemies—for a man like the Nabob has none indifferent among his acquaintances—read, commented, and chalked out a line of conduct for themselves which would not commit them. To-day's article must have been splendidly written, really; for Jansoulet, the coachman, told us that this afternoon, at the Bois, his master had not exchanged ten bows with the people he met, though he drove him ten times round the lake; whereas usually he can no more

keep his hat upon his head than a sovereign taking his constitutional. On coming home, something else awaited him. The three boys had just come home, crying and in great trouble, brought back from the Bourdaloue College by one of the good fathers. For their own sake the poor little ones had been granted a few days' holiday, so that they might not hear, in the parlour or play-ground, anything wounding to their feelings. On hearing this, the Nabob became wild with rage, and smashed a porcelain service; and it appears that, had it not been for Monsieur de Géry, he would have gone straight up to Moëssard and shot him dead.

'And it would have served him right,' said Monsieur Noël, coming in as these last words were spoken, very much excited also; 'there is not one word of truth in the article of that scoundrel. My master never came to Paris before last year. From Tunis to Marseilles, from Marseilles to Tunis, that's all the journeys he ever made; but that swindling scribbler is

taking his revenge on us because we refused to give him twenty thousand francs.'

'Well! then, you were quite wrong,' said Monsieur Francis—Monpavon's Francis, that old dandy, whose only tooth shakes in the middle of his mouth at every word he says, but whom our young ladies are nevertheless sweet upon because of his fine manners. 'Yes, you were wrong. You must be careful how you treat people as long as they may serve or injure you. Your Nabob turned too soon his back upon his old friends, after he had got what he wanted; and between us, dear boy, he is not strong enough to do that sort of thing.'

Here I thought I might be allowed a few words:

'It is a fact, Monsieur Noël, that your master is no longer the same man since his election in Corsica. He adopts a tone and manners—The other day, at the *Territoriale*, he made us such a row as you never heard. We heard him bawling in full board: "You told me a

lie; you robbed me and made a thief of me. Show me your books, you fellows." . . . If he treated Moëssard in this way, I am not surprised the other should take his revenge in his paper.'

'Well! but what does that article say? Who read it?'

Nobody answered. Several had tried to buy it, but in Paris scandal sells like bread. At ten o'clock in the morning, there was not a single copy of the *Messager* to be had. Then a brilliant idea struck one of my 'nieces,' a wide-awake girl if ever there was one: she searched the pockets of one of the numerous overcoats nicely arranged on shelves in the cloak-room. The first she took down:

'Here it is,' said the amiable child, drawing out a *Messager*, all creased, as if it had just been read.

'And here is another,' cried out Tom Bois-Landry, who was making a private search on his side. Third overcoat taken down, third

Messager. And in every one of them the same thing. Whether it had been stuck to the bottom of the pocket, or whether it peeped out and showed its title, the newspaper was in every coat, as the article was in every memory. Only fancy, the Nabob upstairs exchanging compliments with his guests, who might have recited to him by heart all the horrors printed about him. We roared when that idea struck us; but we longed to read in our turn that curious page.

'Come, old Passajon, read us that aloud.'

It was the general wish, and I complied.

I don't know whether you are like me; but when I read aloud, I gargle my voice, I raise and lower it, until at last I cease to understand what I say; like certain singers who don't care for the words, provided they get the tune. Well! it was called 'The Boat of Flowers.' A rather muddled story with Chinese names, in which it was question of a Mandarin lately raised to the first class, and who had formerly kept a 'Boat of Flowers' moored at the other end of the

town, near a *barrière* much frequented by warriors. When we came to the last word of the article we knew no more than at the beginning. We kept winking at each other, and tried to look very clever; but really we knew nothing at all. A riddle without any meaning. We should still be there, planted on our legs and gaping, had it not been for old Francis, who is really a clever fellow, full of knowledge of all kinds, and who explained to us that the *barrière*, where warriors were, was probably the *Ecole Militaire*, and that the 'Boat of Flowers' had not such a pretty name as that in plain French. He gave out that name aloud, though there were ladies present. What an explosion of cries, of 'Ah's!' of 'Oh's!' Some said, 'I always suspected as much;' others, 'It really cannot be.'

'Allow me,' added Francis, formerly trumpeter in the Sixth Lancers—Mora and Monpavon's regiment—'allow me: About twenty years ago, during my last six months' service, I

was quartered at the *Ecole Militaire*, and I remember very well that there was, not far from the *barrière*, a low public-house and ball, called "*Bal Jansoulet*," with disreputable apartments in the upper stories.

'You are an infamous liar, like your master,' interrupted Monsieur Noël, quite beside himself with rage. 'Jansoulet never came to Paris before this time.'

Francis sat a little outside the circle which we were forming round the *marquise*, sipping a glass of liqueur, because champagne affected his nerves and was not sufficiently 'swell' for him. He rose gravely, still holding his glass in his hand, approached Monsieur Noël, and said to him quietly:

'You are an unmannerly fellow, my dear. Already, the other evening, when we were in your rooms, I found your tone coarse and vulgar. It is of no use insulting people; all the more as I have taught fencing in my regiment, and if we carried this matter farther, I

could stick two inches of steel into your body, at the very spot I chose. But I am a good fellow, and, instead of a sword-cut, I'll give you a piece of advice which your master would do well to follow. This is what I should do, if I were you: I would go to Moëssard and buy his silence, at any price. Hemerlingue gives him twenty thousand francs to speak; I would give him thirty thousand to hold his tongue.'

'Never, never!' roared Monsieur Noël. 'I would rather go and wrench the head off that swindling blackguard's body.'

'You will wrench nothing at all. Whether the slander is true or false, you saw this evening what mischief it can work. It is only the prelude of the joys in store for you. Facts are stubborn things, my dear fellow. You have too soon thrown aside your crutches, and tried to walk by yourselves. That requires steadiness and firmness of legs; but when your feet are weak, and you have the misfortune to have a Hemerlingue at your heels, it is a bad job

altogether. Besides, your master's money is becoming scarce. He paid old Schwalbach in bills. Don't speak to me of a Nabob who makes bills! I know very well you have heaps of millions over yonder at Tunis; but your election must be confirmed before you touch them, and if a few more such articles as this one are written against you, I answer for it, it never will be. You have the pretension to fight against Paris, my good fellow, but you are not equal to it. You understand nothing about it. Here we are not in the Levant; but if we don't strangle those who displease us, if we don't tie them up in leather bags and throw them into the sea, we have other ways of getting rid of them. Noël, let your master look to it —some fine morning, Paris will swallow him up as I swallow this plum, stone, skin, and all!'

He looked terrible as he said that, that old man, and in spite of his paint I felt respect for him. Whilst he spoke, we heard music and singing upstairs, and on the square, the horses

of the police shaking their curbs. From the outside our party must have looked brilliant, flaring as it did with thousands of wax candles, and its immense porch illuminated.

And perhaps ruin was lurking under all that! Think of that. We all stood in the vestibule, like rats holding counsel when the ship begins to leak and the crew do not yet suspect it. I could see very well that footmen and maids, the whole rabble in fact, would scamper away at the first note of alarm. Was such a catastrophe impending? and if so, what will become of me, and the *Territoriale*, and my arrears? I felt cold in my back at the thought.

CHAPTER VII.

A PUBLIC MAN.

THE luminous heat of a clear May afternoon was warming the high windows of Mora's mansion like the glass roof of a hot-house. From outside, could be seen, between the branches, the transparent blue silk curtains and the extensive terraces, where the exotic flowers, just fresh from glass-houses, ran like a border along the quay. Big rakes, drawn between the trees of the garden, marked, in the sandy avenues, the light steps of summer. The dripping sound of the garden hose on the verdant lawns seemed to sing summer's refreshing song. All the comfort of the princely residence seemed to bask in the mild temperature, and borrowed its glorious beauty from

the silence and repose of that midday hour—the only one in which was not heard the rumbling of carriages under the arches, the shutting of antechamber doors, and that perpetual vibration produced in the ivy on the walls by the resounding of the handbells, heralding the arrival or the departure of visitors, like the feverish excitement of a worldly house. It was well known that up to three o'clock in the afternoon the Duke gave his audiences at his official residence, and that the Duchess, a Swede still benumbed by the snows of Stockholm, had not yet left her downy bed; therefore, until that hour, no visitors or petitioners made their appearance; and the footmen, perched like flamingoes on the steps of the lonely porch, alone animated it with the spare shadow of their long legs and their lazy yawns of *ennui*.

Exceptionally, on that day, the chestnut brougham of Jenkins was stationed in a corner of the court. The Duke, unwell since the preceding day, had felt worse on leaving the

breakfast table, and had sent for the inventor of the pearls, in order to consult him on his strange state. He felt no particular pain anywhere, and ate with his usual appetite; but he had a sensation of unutterable exhaustion, and the impression of a terrible cold, which nothing could relieve. Thus, at this very time, in spite of the beautiful spring sunshine which filled his room, and eclipsed the flame rising in the hearth as if it had been winter, the Duke shivered in his blue firs, behind his little screens; and whilst signing papers, brought by his official secretary, on a little gilt lacquer table, which cracked and peeled off, so near was it to the fire, he warmed his frigid fingers at the flame, which might have burnt them on the surface without restoring the circulation of life to their livid rigidity.

Whether or not Jenkins felt uneasy with respect to the indisposition of his illustrious patient, certain it is that he appeared anxious. He gave sudden starts, made long strides up

and down the carpets, ferreted about, poked his head right and left, seemingly scenting something he knew was there, something subtle and shadowy like the trace of a perfume or the track left in the air by a passing bird. In the room was heard the crackling of the wood in the hearth, the rustling of papers feverishly turned, the indolent voice of the Duke indicating by a word, always precise and clear, the answer to be returned to a letter of four pages, and the respectful monosyllables of the secretary: 'Yes, Monsieur le Ministre'—'No, Monsieur le Ministre;' then the scratching of the rebellious and heavy pen. Outside, the swallows twittered their joyful note over the surface of the water, and a clarionet played in the direction of the bridges.

'It is impossible,' said the Minister of State, rising all at once; 'take that away, Lartigues, and come back to-morrow. I cannot write. I am too cold. Look here, Doctor; feel my hands; they are as cold as if I had dipped

them in a pail of ice-water. For the last two days my body has been like this. It is ridiculous in such fine weather!'

'I am not astonished,' mumbled the Irishman, in a sharp tone of bad humour, not usual with that mellifluous gentleman.

The door had closed behind the young secretary, who went away with majestic stiffness, but very happy, I should fancy, to feel at liberty, and be able, before returning to the Ministry, to have a couple of hours' stroll in the Tuileries, full of spring toilets and pretty girls, who sat on some of the rows of chairs, under the chestnut-trees in bloom, along which from their roots to their summits ran the great shiver of the month of May. He was not frozen, the secretary, you may be sure!

Jenkins examined his patient in silence, auscultated him; then, with a gruff voice, which might possibly be accounted for by his anxious devotion, his irritation on finding that his prescription had not been attended to:

'Come, my dear Duke,' said he, 'tell me one thing: what sort of life have you been leading lately?'

He knew from the talk of the servants—for he was not above speaking with them in the houses of his regular patients—he knew that the Duke had formed a new *liaison*, that his fresh caprice overmastered and agitated him extremely. That knowledge, together with some remarks he had made elsewhere, racked Jenkins' mind with suspicion, and inspired him with a mad desire to know the name of the lady. That is what he was trying to read on the pale brow of his patient, searching his thoughts rather than inquiring into his ailments. But he had to deal with the inscrutable face of a Don Juan, as hermetically closed as a spring-box, wherein are kept women's mementos and letters. Mora's discretion was locked with the cold-steel look of his blue eyes, against which the most cunning perspicacity was powerless.

'You are mistaken, Doctor,' answered his Grace quietly; 'I have not changed anything in my habits.'

'Well! then, Monsieur le Duc, you were quite wrong,' said the Irishman roughly, mad at not having discovered anything.

But feeling immediately that he had gone too far, he hastened to dilute his bad humour and the severity of his diagnostic in a ptisan of commonplace sentences and axioms. 'It was necessary to be careful—medicine was not magic—the power of Jenkins' pearls had a limit in human strength, the requirements of age, and the resources of nature, which, unfortunately, are not inexhaustible—' and so on.

The Duke interrupted him sharply:

'Look here, Jenkins, you know very well that I hate phrases. There is something wrong with me, is there? What is the matter, then? Why am I so cold?'

'It is anæmia, exhaustion—a want of oil in the lamp.'

'What must I do?'

'Nothing. You require absolute rest from business. You must eat and sleep; nothing more. You should go and pass a few weeks at Grandbois.'

Mora shrugged his shoulders.

'And the Chamber, and the Council, and —Nonsense, it is not possible!'

'I tell you, you must put the drag on; must give up absolutely——'

He was interrupted by the usher in attendance, who came discreetly, on tip-toe, like a dancing master, to give a letter and a card to the Minister, still shivering before the fire. When the Doctor saw that grey satined envelope, of a fanciful shape, he was unable to restrain a start; but the Duke, having opened and perused the letter, rose quite briskly, his cheeks slightly flushed with the colours of fictitious health, which all the fire in the hearth had failed to give him.

'My dear Doctor, at any cost you must——'

The usher stood waiting.

'What do you want? Ah yes, this card. Show the person into the gallery. I am coming.'

The Duke de Mora's gallery—opened twice a week to visitors—was for him neutral ground, a sort of public thoroughfare, where he might see anyone without compromising or committing himself.

When the usher had left:

'Jenkins, my good fellow,' said his Grace, 'you have already done miracles for me. You must work another. Double the dose of my pearls, invent something, anything. But I must be strong and sprightly on Sunday next. You hear, quite strong and sprightly.'

And his fingers—warmed with the fire of fever—clenched the little letter with the agitation of lustful desire.

'Take care, Monsieur le Duc,' said Jenkins, very pale, with tightened lips; 'I do not wish to alarm you too much on the state of your health, but my duty compels me——'

An insolent smile curled the Duke's lips:

'Your duty and my pleasure are two very different things, my good fellow. Let me waste my life if it amuses me. I never had a finer opportunity than now.'

He started.

The Duchess!

A door behind a tapestry had just opened, and a pretty little foolish head, fair and ruffled, showed itself wrapped in the lace and fringes of a princely morning dress:

'What do I hear?' said she. 'You have not been out? Scold him, Doctor. Tell him he is wrong to indulge so. Look at him, he looks the picture of health!'

'You see,' said the Duke, laughing, to the Irishman. 'Don't you come in, Duchess?'

'No, I am taking you with me, on the contrary. My uncle d'Estaing has sent me a cageful of birds from the West Indies, and I wish to show them to you. They are real

wonders, of all colours, with little eyes like black pearls, and as chilly as you are.'

'Let us go and have a look at them,' said the Minister. 'Wait for me here, Jenkins. I shall be back in a few minutes.'

Then, noticing that he was still holding his letter in his hand, he threw it carelessly into the drawer of his little lacquer table, and followed the Duchess with that fine *sang-froid* of a husband accustomed to those evolutions.

What a prodigious artist, what an incomparable architect, must He have been who gave the human face the suppleness of its muscles and its marvellous elasticity! It is impossible to conceive anything better acted than that *grand-seigneur's* face, surprised with his adultery on his lips, his cheeks flushed by the picture of expected volupties, instantly calmed down into the serenity of conjugal affection; nor is it possible to imagine anything finer than the sanctimonious obsequiosity, the paternal smile

of Jenkins—a very Franklin in the presence of the Duchess—suddenly changing, when he found himself alone, into a wild expression of anger and hatred, the ashy paleness of one who conceives a crime, the paleness of a Castaing, or of a Lapommeraie, revolving in his mind his sinister felonies.

He cast a rapid look on each of the two doors, and, instantly, he found himself before the drawer full of precious papers—the gold key was ever left in the lock with that careless insolence which seemed to say: 'No one would dare.'

Well! Jenkins did dare, at all events.

The letter he wanted was there, first of all, lying on a heap of others.

The texture of the paper, the short direction written with a simple, bold hand, and then the perfume, that inebriating, conjuring perfume, the very breath of her divine mouth! It was all true, then. His jealous love had not misled him. He had put the right inter-

pretation on that embarrassment visible for some time past whenever he happened to be there, on those reticent whispers and would-be-young looks of Constance, on those splendid bouquets of full-blown flowers, which were in the studio as if in the mysterious shadow of *her* shame! That indomitable pride had surrendered then? But why not to him, Jenkins? He, at all events, had loved her long, loved her ten years—he was ten years younger than the other, too, and you may be sure, he did not tremble. All those thoughts crossed his mind, like arrows shot from an indefatigable bow. And wounded, torn to tatters, his eyes blinded with the rush of blood, he stood there, looking at that cold little silky envelope, which he dared not open lest his last doubt should vanish; when, suddenly, the rustling sound of a hanging warning him that somebody was coming, he threw the letter quickly back again, and shut the marvellously fitting drawer of the lacquered table.

'Hallo! Is that you, Jansoulet? How did you come here?'

'His Grace told me to wait for him in his room,' answered the Nabob, very proud of being introduced into the inner apartments, like a familiar friend, at a time, too, when the Duke denied himself to others. The fact is, the Duke was beginning to feel real sympathy for that savage, and that for various reasons: First of all, he liked bold, daring, lucky adventurers. Was he not one such himself? Then the Nabob amused him; his brogue, his free and easy manners, his off-hand and impudent flattery, were a relief to the eternal conventionalities of his *entourage*—that administrative and stilted scourge which he absolutely hated, as he hated their verbosity. Indeed, his dread of mere words went so far that he himself hardly ever finished his sentences. But the Nabob ended his own phrases with such curious, startling effect—it was truly refreshing. He was, moreover, a splendid card-player, and could,

without wincing, lose at the Rue Royale Club, five thousand francs on one point at *écarté*.

Another of his good points was that he was always ready to buy any of the Duke's pictures which his Grace wished to part from, at his Grace's own price. To those various grounds of sympathy must be added another and nobler one, viz. a feeling of pity and indignation which he had lately felt on witnessing the eagerness with which his enemies persecuted that unfortunate man; the cowardly and merciless war, so skilfully waged that public opinion, ever credulous and sniffing at the wind, was beginning to be seriously influenced. We must do Mora the justice to say that he never followed after the crowd. On finding in some corner of his house the pitiful and troubled face of the Nabob, he thought it cowardly of him to receive the man in a corner, and therefore invited him to go upstairs and wait for him in his room.

Jenkins and Jansoulet, rather embarrassed

on finding themselves face to face, exchanged a few commonplace words. Their great friendship had cooled considerably for some time past, because Jansoulet had flatly refused a new subsidy in support of Bethlehem, leaving the affair on the hands of the Irishman, whom this defection had greatly enraged; but what made him still more furious, just now, was that he had not had time to open Felicia's letter before the arrival of the intruder. On the other hand, the Nabob was anxiously asking himself whether the Doctor intended to be present at the conversation which he was about to have with the Duke, respecting the infamous allusions with which the *Messager* harassed him; for he wished to ascertain whether slander had not cooled that priceless kindness of the Minister, which was so necessary to him, now that his election was being inquired into by the Chamber. The reception he had met with in the gallery had half tranquillised him; but when the Duke came in, walked straight up to him with his out-

stretched hand, his mind was at once set at rest on that point.

'Well, my poor Jansoulet, Paris has you a sorry welcome. What anger and hatred you have stirred, what row——'

'Ah! Monsieur le Duc, if you knew——'

'I know, I read——' said the Minister, approaching the fire.

'I hope your Grace does not believe that infamous libel. Besides, I have here——I bring——' With his big, hairy hands, trembling with emotion, he searched among his papers, in an enormous portfolio which he held under his arm.

'Never mind, never mind! I know all that. I know that, wilfully or otherwise, they confound you with another person, whom family considerations——'

Seeing the wild astonishment of the Nabob, who stood stupefied to find him so well informed, the Duke added, with a smile:

'A State Minister must know everything.

But do not be uneasy; your return shall be confirmed by the Chamber.'

Jansoulet heaved a sigh of relief.

'Ah! Monsieur le Duc, you don't know what good you do me with those words. I was beginning to despair. My enemies are so powerful! No luck, besides—— Do you know that it is precisely Le Merquier who is to report on my election?'

'Le Merquier. You don't say so?'

'Yes, Le Merquier, Hemerlingue's agent, that canting hypocrite who converted the Baroness, because his religion forbade him, no doubt, to take a Mussulman for his mistress.'

'Be calm, Jansoulet, be calm.'

'I cannot be calm, Monsieur le Duc. I am losing my temper at last. Think of the position in which I am put by those wretches. My return ought to have been confirmed a week ago; but they purposely put off the day, because they know the terrible position in which I am—all my fortune sequestrated, the

Bey waiting for the decision of the Chamber to know whether he can rob me or not. I have eighty millions at Tunis, Monsieur le Duc; and here I am beginning to feel the want of money. If this lasts much longer——'

He wiped off the large drops which trickled down his cheeks.

'Well! I will see to your immediate validation,' said the Minister, with a certain vivacity. 'I will write to—what d'you call him—to be quick with his report; and even if I were to be carried to the Chamber——'

'Is your Grace unwell?' asked Jansoulet, with a tone of interest which was not assumed, you may be sure.

'No! only a little weak. I have not blood enough; but Jenkins will give me some. Won't you, Jenkins?'

The Irishman, who was not listening, made an uncertain motion.

'Thunder! and I— why, I have too much blood.'

And the Nabob widened his cravat round his neck, swollen by his emotion and the heat of the room :

'I wish I could give you a little of my blood, Monsieur le Duc.'

'It would be a lucky thing for both of us,' said the Minister, with a touch of irony, 'for you chiefly, who are violent and lose your temper, at a crisis when you require so much coolness. Take care, Jansoulet. Watch over your impulses, resist your anger. What they wish, is that you should be led into some unwarrantable act. Repeat to yourself that you are now a public character, standing upon a platform, and whose every motion is closely watched. The newspapers insult you! Do not read them, if you cannot conceal the emotion they cause you. Don't do as I did with my blind man of the Pont de la Concorde, that abominable clarionet player who, for the last ten years, disturbs my peace by playing the whole day long some tune out of *Norma*.

I tried everything to induce him to leave that place—money, threats. He refused. The police? Nonsense! with our modern ideas, it becomes a difficult thing to remove a blind man from his bridge. The opposition papers would take up the matter, the Parisians would make a fable of it: "*The Cobbler and the Financier.*" "*The Duke and the Clarionet-player.*" I must be resigned. Besides, it is my own fault. What business had I to let that man see that he annoyed me? I am sure that my torture is now the happiness of his life. Every morning he leaves his den, with his dog, his stool, his frightful clarionet, and says to himself: "Let us go and bother the Duke de Mora." He never misses one day, the wretch! If I were to open the window a little, you would hear that deluge of thin, sharp notes above the noise of the water and the carriages. Well! now, mind this: That writer of the *Messager* is your clarionet player; if you show him that his music annoys you, you will never see

the end of it. And now, my dear *député*, let me remind you that you are to attend a committee meeting at three o'clock, and excuse me if I send you back quickly to the Chamber.

Then turning to Jenkins:

'You know what I asked you, Doctor. Pearls for the day after to-morrow, and strong, too!'

Jenkins started. He felt just such a shock as those which wake us up when we take a leap in a dream.

'It is all right, my dear Duke; I will give you wind enough to win the Derby.'

He bowed and left the apartment, laughing like a wolf—that is, showing all his white, separate teeth. The Nabob took his leave in his turn, his heart overflowing with gratitude, but not daring to show it to that sceptical Duke, in whom every demonstration of feeling aroused suspicion.

The Minister of State, being now left alone, crouching before the crackling and burning

fire, sheltered in his warm, comfortable, luxurious room, which the caressing rays of a May sun made more pleasant still, began again to shiver, to shiver so much, that Felicia's letter, which he read with the desire of love, trembled with the noise of rustling silk, at the end of his livid fingers.

A *député's* status is a rather strange one during the period which follows his return and precedes the 'verification of powers,' as they say in French parliamentary jargon. It resembles that of a bridegroom during the twenty-four hours which separate the legal marriage at the *mairie* from the religious ceremony. In both cases there are rights which cannot be used, a semi-happiness and semi-powers, a constraint which arises from the fear of going too far or not far enough, in short a want of proper equilibrium. You are married, yet not married; a *député*, but not certainly so. Only, for the *député*, the uncertainty lasts days and weeks; and the longer it lasts the more problematic becomes

the validation. It is torture for the unfortunate representative on trial, to have to come to the Chamber, to occupy a place which he may not keep, to listen to debates which he may possibly not hear to the end, to fix in his eyes, in his ears, the delightful remembrance of parliamentary sittings, with their seas of bald heads and apoplectic faces, the noise of crumpling paper, ushers' voices, paper-knives drumming upon the desks, private conversations, in the midst of which the orator's voice sounds like a loud or timid solo chanted on one note only.

That enervating situation was, in the case of the Nabob, rendered still more unbearable by the libellous lies, whispered at first, but now printed and circulated in thousands of copies, which caused him to be tabooed by his colleagues.

During the first days which followed his return, he used to go about in the lobbies, the library, the refreshment-room, the conference hall, like the other *députés*, delighted to put his foot in all the corners of that majestic

labyrinth. But now, unknown to most, neglected by a few members of the Rue Royale Club who avoided him, he was hated by all the clerical set, at the head of which stood Le Merquier, and by the tribe of financiers, hostile to that stupendous millionnaire who had the power to affect the quotations on 'Change —like those boats of strong tonnage which displace the water level in a harbour. His isolation became more marked, if he changed his place in the Chamber; for the same hostility accompanied him everywhere.

His gait, his movements, acquired a certain embarrassed air, a want of confidence in himself, which stamped his acts with hesitancy. He felt he was being watched. The refreshment room was an airy, well-lighted chamber, looking on the presidential gardens. He liked to go there, because the *députés*, when they stood before the long white marble bar, loaded with provisions and drinks, lost some of their self-conceit and legislative arrogance, and

became more familiar, more natural, whilst satisfying the cravings of nature; but he knew that the next day an offensive, sneering note would appear in the *Messager*, and represent him to his electors as a confirmed drunkard!

Those terrible electors were another of his plagues!

They came in squads, invaded the lobbies, sauntered about in every direction, like fiery little black horses, calling one another from one end of the sonorous hall to the other: 'O Pa! O Tcha!' breathing with delight the odour of government and administration diffused in that official atmosphere, making eyes to the ministers who happened to be passing, following their track, and sniffing at their venerable pockets as if some prebend was about to fall therefrom; but, above all things, surrounding Jansoulet, and overwhelming him with so many exacting petitions, claims and demonstrations of all sorts, that, in order to get rid of that gesticulating crowd, which everybody turned round to look at, and which made him look like the

delegate of a tribe of wild Tooaregs in the midst of a civilised people, he was obliged to implore with a look the help of some usher in attendance, who, being accustomed to that kind of salvage, hastened to him, and with a busy air told him 'that he was wanted immediately in number eight committee-room.' And so it happened that, ill at ease everywhere, driven from the corridors, the lobbies, and the refreshment room, the poor Nabob resolved at last not to leave his bench, where he sat motionless and dumb the whole sitting through.

He had, however, one friend in the Chamber, the newly elected *député* of Deux-Sèvres, called Monsieur Sarigue—a name which means 'opossum.' The poor man resembled the inoffensive and ugly animal whose name he bore. He had a spare red beard, timid eyes, a hopping gait, and wore gaiters. His bashfulness was so great that he could not say two words without stammering, had hardly any voice at all, and kept continually chewing jujubes, which made his utterance thicker still. What had such a

weakling to do in the Chamber? What delirious feminine ambition had impelled that being to undertake a public duty, who was incapable of performing even private functions?

Through an amusing irony of fate, Jansoulet, who was himself a prey to all the anxieties attendant on his validation, had been chosen by the eighth committee to report on the Deux-Sèvres election; and Monsieur Sarigue, conscious of his own nullity, dreading horribly to be sent in shame back to his province, used to prowl, with humble and deprecating looks, about that big curly fellow whose broad shoulders moved under his thin frock-coat like a smith's bellows, never once suspecting that a poor being, anxious like himself, was hidden under that vigorous envelope.

In preparing his report on the Deux-Sèvres election, in classifying the numerous protests, the accusations of corruption, dinners given, money distributed, casks of wine tapped at the doors of the *mairies*—the usual attendants of

an election in those days—Jansoulet trembled for his own case. 'I have done all that, by Jove!' said he to himself, terrified. Monsieur Sarigue might be easy; he could not have laid his hand upon a better disposed, a more indulgent reporter; for the Nabob, who pitied the poor man, knowing by experience how painful is the anguish of expectation, had hurried on his work; and the enormous portfolio, which he carried under his arm when he left the Duke's mansion, contained his report, ready to be read to the committee.

Was it owing to his first attempt at public functions, to the kind words of the Duke, or to the splendid weather ever delightfully enjoyed by that *méridional*, so naturally liable to physical impressions, and accustomed to move about under the blue heaven and in the sunshine?—we are unable to decide; but one thing is certain, that the ushers of the Chamber saw that day a splendid and self-conscious Jansoulet whom they had not known before. He had seen

at the gate big Hemerlingue's coach, easily recognisable by the unusual width of its doors; and the sight had entirely restored him his self-confidence and audacity. 'The enemy is there. Let us be careful!' said he to himself. When he was crossing the lobby he perceived the banker talking in a corner with Le Merquier, the reporter, passed quite near them, and looked at them with an air of triumph which made the others think: 'What can be the matter?'

Then, delighted with his own coolness, he walked straight to the committee-rooms—large high apartments opening right and left on a long corridor—which contain big tables with green covers, heavy and uniform seats, and which leave the impression of wearisome solemnity. The *députés* were coming in. They grouped themselves, talked, gesticulated, bowed, shook hands, threw their heads back; and all this, seen upon the luminous background of the windows, gave them the look of moving shadows. There

were some among them who walked with bent backs, solitary, as if crushed under the weight of the thoughts which furrowed their foreheads. Others whispered to one another, confiding news extremely mysterious and of the highest importance, a finger to their lips, an eye wide open, as if to convey a silent recommendation. A country look was visible in all that: a variety of intonations—the passionate emphasis of the South, the drawling accent of the Centre, the singing delivery of Brittany, harmonising in the same idiotic and pot-bellied conceit—frock-coats of a country cut, mountain shoes, home-spun linen, the self-possession of coachmen, the self-importance of small town clubs, local expressions and provincialisms introduced abruptly into the political or administrative jargon—that flabby and colourless phraseology which has invented such expressions as '*Les questions brûlantes revenant sur l'eau*' and '*Les Individualités sans mandat.*'

Judging from a passing glance at those

excited or thoughtful men, you would have taken them for the greatest combiners of ideas. Unfortunately, on sitting days they became transformed, remained motionless on their seats, timid like schoolboys under the schoolmaster's cane, laughing meanly whenever their witty president cracked his joke, making the most absurd motions, or interrupting in such a way as to make you think that it was not a mere type but a whole tribe of men, Henri Monnier stigmatised in his immortal sketch. There were but two or three orators in the whole Chamber. The rest knew well enough how to plant themselves before the chimney of a country drawing-room, after a good dinner at the Prefecture, and could say with nasal intonation: 'The Administration, gentlemen,' or 'The Government of the Emperor;' but they were incapable of going one step farther.

Generally the good Nabob allowed himself to be imposed upon by those attitudes, that noise, like that of an empty spinning-wheel, which self-

important men know so well how to make; but to-day he felt himself the equal of them all. As he sat at the head of the green table, his portfolio before him, his two elbows spread out, reading the report prepared by de Géry, the members of the committee looked at him wonderingly.

It was a clear, flowing, and concise abstract of the last fortnight's work, in which their ideas were so well expressed that they could hardly recognise them. But, two or three of them finding the report too favourable, and that he passed too lightly over certain protests which had reached the committee, the reporter addressed them with astonishing confidence, with the fluency and copiousness of expression which characterise his fellow-countrymen;—he proved to them that a *député* should be made answerable up to a certain point only for the imprudence of his agents, that no election could otherwise bear a minute and searching scrutiny; and as, after all, he was pleading his own cause,

in defending that or another, he spoke with irresistible warmth and conviction, taking care to drop occasionally one of those long, colourless, crawling substantives, such as the committee loved to hear. His colleagues listened to him, thoughtful and collected, conveying their impressions to one another by little nods, and drawing, to centre their attention, flourishes and little figures on their note-books. This pastime was quite in harmony with the school-like noise of the corridors—a murmur like that of lessons repeated by heart—and the heaps of sparrows which were chirruping under the windows, in a flagged yard surrounded by an arcade—just like the playground of a French school. The report having been adopted, Monsieur Sarigue was sent for. He came, with a pale, discomposed face, and stammered like a confused criminal. It would have done your heart good to see the air of authority and protection with which Jansoulet encouraged him, reassured him: 'Compose yourself, my dear colleague.'

But the members on the eighth committee were as serious as stocks. They were nearly all Messieurs Sarigues in their way—two or three of them even suffered from softening of the brain and paralysis of the tongue. So much assurance and eloquence had enraptured them.

It was about six o'clock when Jansoulet, having completed his task, left, accompanied as far as his carriage by his grateful colleague. The weather was splendid, and the sun was setting in golden magnificence, over the Seine, in the direction of the *Trocadéro*. Our robust plebeian was forced, in order to keep up appearances, to drive in his own carriage and to wear gloves, but he dispensed with them as often as he could. The beautiful weather tempted him to walk home; and so, dismissing his carriage, with his portfolio under his arm, he crossed the Pont de la Concorde. Since the 1st of May he had not felt so happy. Shoving a shoulder forward with every step, he placed his hat on the back of his head, as

he had seen political men wear theirs, when they are tired out, overwhelmed with business, and they wish to cool in the fresh air the laborious fever of their brains—as an engine lets off its steam when its day's work is done. He walked among other men who looked like him, and who had evidently just left the Chamber —that temple with a colonnade which faces the Madeleine, right across the monumental fountains of the Place. On their passage, people turned round to look at them, and said to one another: 'Those are *députés*.' Jansoulet heard those words with childish joy, a plebeian joy, made up of ignorance and native vanity.

'The *Messager*! Evening edition!'

That cry came from the kiosque where papers are sold at the end of the bridge. At this hour it was full of newspapers—just arrived, lying in heaps—which two women folded as fast as they could, and which had a smell of damp, of recent news, and of the day's success or scandal. Nearly all the *députés* bought a paper in passing,

and perused it quickly in the hope of seeing their names in it. But Jansoulet, afraid to see his, did not stop. All at once, this idea crossed his mind: 'Must not a public character be above all such weaknesses? I am strong enough now to read anything.' He therefore retraced his steps, and bought a paper, like his colleagues. He opened it, very calm indeed, and looked straight at the place where Moëssard's articles were usually to be found. Just so; there is one. Always the same title: '*Chinoiseries*,' and signed with an *M*.

'Ah! ah!' said the public character, firm and strong like a block of marble, and his lips curled with a smile of contempt.

Mora's lesson was still tinkling in his ears; but if he had forgotten it, the small, shrill, ironical notes of a clarionet, playing the air of *Norma*, would have sufficed to remind him of it. But when we have made all our calculations respecting the hurried events of life, we must still make an allowance for the unforeseen.

The poor Nabob had not done so; and that is why he suddenly felt a rush of blood to his head, blinding him; and why a strangled cry of rage gurgled in his throat, nearly stifling him. His mother, dear old Françoise, was mixed to-day with the infamous banter of the *Bateau des Fleurs.* What a splendid shot that Moëssard was! How well he knew the sensitive places, in that heart so innocently bare!

'Be calm, Jansoulet, be calm!'

In vain did he repeat to himself those words, over and over again; anger, a mad rage, a thirst for blood, had taken possession of him. His first impulse was to rush into a cab, to escape from the irritation of the street, and to save himself the trouble of walking and finding his way —in fact, to take a conveyance just as you do for a wounded man. This was the hour when people of fashion are returning home from the Bois. The Place was full of open carriages coming down from the glorious and blazing Arc-de-Triomphe, and moving in the direction of the

fresh, violet-tinged Tuileries. They followed each other along the sloping avenue, until they came to the square, where the rigid statues, firm on their pedestals, and their heads crowned with towers, looked at them as they separated, some going to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, others to the Rue Royale and the Rue Rivoli.

Jansoulet, his paper in his hand, crossed this crowd without thinking of it, walking instinctively towards the club, where he daily went to play from six to seven o'clock. He was still a public man, but excited, speaking aloud, blubbering oaths and threats, in a voice which suddenly became full of tenderness as he thought of the good old woman. 'To have mixed her with that—her! Oh, if she read, if she could understand! What chastisement could he invent for such an infamous scoundrel?' He was arriving at the Rue Royale, into which rushed, rapid like a return home, amid the flashes of the axletrees, visions of veiled women and fair-haired children, carriages of all shapes

returning from the Bois, bringing a little vegetable mould back to the pavement of Paris, and the effluvia of the spring mingled with the smell of *poudre-de-riz*.

A high phaeton on light wheels was passing opposite the Ministry of Marine. It resembled a big shepherd-spider, of which the little groom on the rumble and the two persons occupying the front seats formed the body. On turning the corner, the wheel nearly grazed the foot-paths. The Nabob raised his head, and smothered a cry.

By the side of a painted girl, with red hair, in a very small hat and broad strings, and who, perched on her little leather cushion, drove the horse with her hands, her eyes, all her made-up person, stiff and bending forward at the same time, sat, fresh-coloured and painted also, blooming on the same dung-heap, fattened on the same vices, Moëssard, the handsome Moëssard—the wench and the scribbler! and she was not the most corrupt of the two. Overlooking

those women, who sat lounging in their carriages; those men who faced them, buried under flounces; all those attitudes of fatigue and *ennui*, which the idle classes exhibit in public, as if in contempt of pleasure and riches, there they sat, throning insolently; she, very proud to exhibit the queen's lover at her side, he, shameless by the side of that creature who signalled to men with her whip, sheltered, on the seat where she perched, from the salutary control of the police. In order to excite the jealousy of his royal mistress, it was perhaps necessary that he should thus parade under her windows, in the company of Suzanne Bloch, *alias* Suze la Rousse!

'Gee up! gee up!'

The horse, a splendid pacer, with fine legs, a true *demi-monde* steed, recovering its position with graceful prancing, seemed to be dancing and did not advance. Jansoulet dropped his portfolio, and, as if he had dropped at the same time all his gravity, all his dignity as a public man,

he made a terrible bound forward, seized the curb of the animal, and stopped him with his strong hairy hands.

An arrest in the Rue Royale, in daytime! Only that Tartar could have dared such a thing!

'Come down,' said he to Moëssard, whose face was seen to spread with yellow and green patches as he perceived him. 'Come down, instantly.'

'Will you let go my horse, you bloated—— Whip the horse, Suzanne; it is the Nabob.'

She tried to gather up the reins; but the animal, held fast, reared so violently, that the fragile equipage nearly overthrew all those it carried. Then, moved by one of those fits of anger, which in those low-born women split all the varnish on their faces and all the clothes on their backs, she lashed, with two strokes of her whip, the Nabob's tanned and hard face, which became suffused with an expression of cruelty, all the greater that his

short nose, parted at the end like that of a terrier, grew absolutely white.

'Come down, by G—, or I upset you!'

The street was partly blocked up. There was an eddy of carriages, slowly turning the obstacle. Amid thousands of prying eyes, amid the cries of coachmen and the clinking of curbs, two wrists of steel shook the phaeton.

'Jump down,' said the woman, looking at that Hercules with interest. 'Jump down; don't you see he will upset us?'

Hardly had Moëssard alighted, and before he had time to reach the footpath, where the black kepis of policemen were seen hurrying, when Jansoulet threw himself upon him, lifted him up by the nape of his neck, like a rabbit, and without paying attention to his protestations and his frightened stammering:

'Yes, yes,' shrieked he, 'I shall give you satisfaction, you scoundrel. But first of all I will treat you as men do unclean beasts, to prevent them beginning again——'

Thereupon he began to rub and scrub him with his newspaper, which he used as a clout, stifling him, blinding him, scratching him till he bled under his paint. They tore him out of his hands, purple and smothered. A little more and he would have killed him.

When the stir was over, the Nabob pulled down his cuffs which had gone up, smoothed his crumpled linen, picked up his portfolio and the papers on Sarigue's return which lay scattered about as far as the gutter, and answered the policeman who required his name to make a report:

'Bernard Jansoulet, *Député* for Corsica.'

A public man!

Only then did he remember that he was a public man. Who could have suspected it, on seeing him thus out of breath and bare-headed, like a market porter fresh from a fight, under the greedy, cold, jeering looks of the crowd, now beginning to disperse?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE APPARITION.

Would you like to see sincére, honest love? Would you like to witness a gush of affection, to hear the ring of laughter—the laughter of overwhelming happiness, which is only separated from tears by a little contraction of the mouth—the pretty nonsense of young girls, lighted by clear, transparent eyes, through which you may read to the depths of their souls? You will find all that, this Sunday morning, in a house which you know already—a new house, up yonder, at the extremity of the old Faubourg. The glass case on the ground-floor is brighter than usual, the bill-boards dance more merrily than ever above the door, and joyous bursts rise out of the open window, like the frolics of happiness.

'Accepted! It is accepted! Oh, what luck!' Henriette, Elise, come, quick. Monsieur Maranne's play is accepted!'

André knows the news since yesterday. Cardailhac, the lessee of the *Nouveautés*, had sent for him to tell him that his drama would be taken up at once and played next month. They passed the evening together, talking of the decoration, scenery, and cast. It was too late, when he left the theatre, to knock at his neighbour's door; therefore the happy author watched for the day with feverish impatience, and as soon as he heard footsteps below, and the shutters open with a clap against the wall, he quickly went down to tell the news to his good friends. Now they are all assembled, the young ladies in their pretty morning dresses, their hair hastily twisted in a knot behind, and Monsieur Joyeuse, whom the news surprised as he was shaving, showing under his braided cap a strange half-shaven face. But the most excited is André Maranne; for

you know what the acceptance of *Révolte* implies for him, and what is the understanding between them and Bonne-maman. The poor fellow looks at her, as if to seek encouragement in her eyes; and those chaffing but kindly eyes seem to say: 'Try! what risk is there?' The better to muster up his courage, he looks at Mademoiselle Elise, blooming like a flower, with her long lashes lowered. At last, plucking up his spirits:

'Monsieur Joyeuse,' says he with a strangled voice, 'I have something very important to communicate to you.'

Monsieur Joyeuse is astonished.

'Something important to communicate— Good heavens! you frighten me.'

And lowering his voice also:

'Perhaps the young ladies are in the way?'

'No. Bonne-maman knows all about it. Mademoiselle Elise suspects what it is also. It is only the children——' Henriette and her sister are invited to pass into the next room,

which they do, one with a majestic look of wounded feelings, like a true daughter of the Saint-Amands; the other, the young Chinese, Yaïa, hardly able to keep herself from laughing.

A great silence follows. Then the lover begins his little story.

I am inclined to think Mademoiselle Elise suspects something; for as soon as the young neighbour began to speak of communicating something, she pulled her French history out of her pocket, and was instantly absorbed in the adventures of So-and-so, called 'le Hutin,' a pathetic subject which makes her book tremble between her fingers. It is indeed enough to make anyone tremble to see the surprise, the indignant stupefaction, with which Monsieur Joyeuse receives the proposal for his daughter's hand.

Is it possible? How did that happen? What a prodigious thing! Who ever would have suspected it?

Suddenly the good man bursts into a loud

laugh. Well! no; it is not so. He has long known all about it. Somebody told him everything.

Somebody told him everything! Has Bonnemaman betrayed them? Seeing the reproachful looks which are turned upon her, the little culprit comes forward with a smile:

'Yes, dears, it was I. The secret was too heavy for me to keep alone. Besides, father is so good—it is impossible to conceal anything from him.'

Thus speaking, she throws her arms round the little man's neck; but there is room enough for two; and even after Mademoiselle Elise has taken refuge there, Monsieur Joyeuse's hand is held out, affectionate and paternal, to him whom he henceforth considers as his son. Silent embraces, long passionate looks exchanged, happy moments one would like to hold back for ever by the fragile ends of their wings! And now they talk, they laugh softly, as they remember certain

details. Monsieur Joyeuse relates that the secret was revealed to him in the first instance by knocking spirits, one day as he was alone in André's rooms. 'How is business getting on, Monsieur Maranne?' asked the spirits; and it was himself who answered in the absence of Maranne: 'Pretty well for the time of the year, gentle spirits.' You should have seen the roguish look of the little man as he kept repeating 'Pretty well for the time of the year;' whilst Mademoiselle Elise, full of confusion, at the idea that it was with her father she had been communicating, absolutely vanished under her fair locks.

The first excitement over, and the voices having recovered their steadiness, they speak more seriously. One thing is certain, that Madame Joyeuse, *née* de Saint-Amand, would never have consented to that marriage. André Maranne is not rich, still less noble. Fortunately the old accountant does not share his wife's ideas of grandeur. They love, they are

young, healthy, and good; that is wealth enough, and of a kind which will require no lawyer's help to settle. The young couple shall take their abode in the story above. The photographic studio shall be kept, unless *Révolte* produces enormous receipts—trust the dreamer for that. In this way the father will always be with them. He has a good situation in a stock-broker's office, books to audit; provided the small craft keeps in the water of the big ship, everything will get on swimmingly—tide, wind, and their good star helping!

One thing inspires Monsieur Joyeuse with misgivings. 'Will André's parents consent to that marriage? Will Doctor Jenkins, so rich, so eminent in his profession——'

'Let us not speak of that man,' says André, turning pale; 'he is a wretch to whom I am under no obligation—who is nothing to me.'

He stops, rather embarrassed to explain that uncontrollable burst of passion; then he resumes somewhat more gently:

'My mother, who occasionally comes here to see me, in spite of injunctions to the contrary, was the first to know my projects. She already loves Mademoiselle Elise like her own daughter. You shall see, Mademoiselle, how good, beautiful, and amiable she is. What a pity she belongs to that wicked man, who tyrannises over her, tortures her to the point of forbidding her to pronounce the name of her son!'

Poor Maranne heaves a sigh, pregnant with the grief which he conceals in the depths of his heart. But what melancholy could be proof against that dear face radiant with fair locks, and the brilliant prospect of future happiness? All the grave points having been settled, the door is opened, and the two exiles are invited to come in. In order that those little heads may not be filled with thoughts above their ages, it has been agreed that nothing should be said before them of the prodigious event, that they should only be told to dress quickly,

breakfast more quickly still, in order that they might all go and pass the afternoon at the Bois, where Maranne is to read them his play, before they go to Suresnes, to eat whitebait at Koutzen's.

A whole programme of delights, in honour of the success of *Révolte* and of another good news which they shall hear later.

'Ah! indeed. What is it?' ask the two little girls with their most innocent looks.

But if you think they do not know what it is —if you think that, when Mademoiselle Elise was knocking three times against the ceiling, they believed that it was specially to inquire about the customers—then all I can tell you is that you are more credulous than old Joyeuse was.

'Never mind, never mind, mesdemoiselles; go and get dressed.'

Then begins another tune:

'What dress shall I put on, Bonne-maman? The grey one?'

'Bonne-maman, I have only got one string to my hat.'

'Bonne-maman, my dear, how is it I have no more starched cravats?'

For ten minutes, there is a continual whirr of steps going and coming, and of questions asked to the charming "granny.' Everyone wants her. She has all the keys, gives out the pretty white goffered linen, the embroidered handkerchiefs, the gloves, all the treasures which, when they have left their boxes and cupboards and lie spread out on the beds, give to a house its Sunday look of joyful festivity.

Hard-working people, those who work by the job, alone know that joy, which returns every week, and which is consecrated by the customs of a nation. For them, held prisoners during the week, the Sunday is marked in their small almanacs as a luminous space with refreshing breezes. That Sunday, so wearisome to the rich, to the Parisians of the boulevards, whose habits it disturbs, so sad to those exiles, away from their families, constitutes for a great many beings the only reward, the only goal to

which they tend through the desperate efforts of six days' hard work. Neither the rain nor the hail can prevent them from going out, and shutting behind them the door of the deserted workshop, of the little close lodgings. But when the spring comes, when the May sunshine brightens the Sunday, as it does this morning, when it dresses it in bright happy colours, oh! then, that day is the feast of feasts!

If you wish to know it well, go and see it in the working quarters of Paris, in the dark streets which it lightens, which it widens, by closing the shops, by putting up the dray-carts, thus making room for the rings of well-washed and cleanly-dressed children, for the games of shuttlecock, mixing with the circuitous flight of swallows, under some porch of old Paris. Go and see it in the swarming, feverish *faubourgs*, where, from early morn, its presence is felt, calm and reposing, in the silence of the mill; watch it as it passes, with the ringing of its bells, with the sharp whistle of locomotive-

engines, pouring, in the horizon, all round the suburbs, like an immense song of holiday and deliverance. Then will you understand and love it.

Paris Sunday, Sunday of hard and humble working men, often have I abused thee without reason, wasted seas of ink in reviling thy noisy exuberant merriment, the dust of rail-way-stations full of thy noise, the helpless omnibuses which thou takest by storm, thy wine-songs issuing from the tilted carts which pass decked out in green and pink robes, thy barrel-organs grinding their melopœias under the balcony of an empty court-yard. But now, abjuring my past errors, I praise and bless thee, for all the joy and solace thou bringest to honest and courageous labour, for the laugh of children who welcome thee, for the pride which mothers feel in dressing up their little ones in thy honour, for the dignity which thou givest to the humblest abodes, for the gaudy clothes put aside for thee in the halting chest of

drawers; above all, I bless thee for the increase of happiness which thou didst provide for the big new house, at the end of the old *faubourg*.

When they are all dressed, and have take a hasty breakfast—for the young girls eat very little—they pass into the drawing-room to put on their hats before the mirror. Bonne-maman gives a last look to each in particular, sticking a pin here, tying a ribbon there, tidying the paternal cravat. But whilst all these little folks are pawing with impatience, attracted out by the beauty of the day, suddenly the door-bell rings and disturbs the feast.

'Suppose we don't open?' the children propose.

And what relief, what shouts of exultation when they see their friend Paul!

'Quick, quick, come in. We have good news to tell you!'

He knew before any of them that the play was accepted. He had had a deal to do to induce Cardailhac to read it. For the lessee,

at the mere sight of the little lines, as he called the verses, wished to send the manuscript to the Levantine and her shampooer, as was done with all the plays of his theatre. But Paul took good care not to mention his intervention. As for the other event, that of which nobody spoke for fear of the children, he had no difficulty in guessing it by the tremulous 'Good morning' of Maranne, whose fair mane stood erect on his skull, raised with both hands by the poet—a usual thing with him to express his joy—by the embarrassed looks of Elise, by the triumphant bearing of Monsieur Joyeuse, who drew himself up proudly in his new clothes, his face beaming with the happiness of his children.

Bonne-maman alone preserved her usual quiet air. As she busied herself about her sister, a still tenderer attention than usual, a greater care to render her prettier, was apparent in her. It was a delightful sight to watch that girl of twenty adorning another, without jealousy, without regret, with a touch of a

mother's denial, happy in the young love of her daughter, in remembrance of her own past happiness. Paul saw that; nay, he was the only one who saw it. But as he stood admiring Aline, he asked himself with sadness whether there would ever be room, in that maternal heart, for other affections than those of her present family; and, in her mind, for other cares than those which centred on the peaceful and bright circle, where Bonne-maman so prettily presided over the evening work.

Love, you know, is a poor blind boy, who can neither hear nor speak, and is guided by intuitions, divinations, and the nervous faculties of disease. It is truly pitiful to see him wander, grope, totter, feel his supports with his fingers, and guide himself with the awkward hesitancy of a helpless invalid. At the very moment when Paul, questioning within himself Aline's capacity for love, was informing his friends that he was on the eve of making a journey of several days, or perhaps weeks, he

failed to see the sudden paleness of the young girl's face, and did not hear the cry of pain which escaped her discreet lips:

'You are going!'

Yes, he was going to Tunis, very uneasy to leave his poor Nabob in the midst of the gluttonous pack. But Mora's protection comforted him a little; besides, that journey was absolutely necessary.

'And the *Territoriale*?' asked the old accountant, still faithful to his idea. 'How are they getting on there? I still see Jansoulet's name as Chairman of the Board. Cannot you get him out of that den of thieves? Take care, take care.'

'I know it very well, Monsieur Joyeuse. But to get out of that mess honourably, we want money, much money, another sacrifice of two or three millions; and we have not got them. That is precisely the reason why I am going to Tunis, to try and save from the Bey's rapacity a piece of that large fortune which he so

unjustly withholds. Just now, I have yet a few chances of success, whereas later——'

'Well! then, my dear boy, go quickly; and if you return, as I hope you will, with a good bag of gold, attend at once to Paganetti's band. Think that one shareholder, less patient than the others, would suffice to blow the whole thing, to obtain an inquiry; and you know what an inquiry would reveal.—On thinking the matter over,' added Monsieur Joyeuse, with knitted brows, 'I am even surprised that Hemerlingue, in his hatred against you, has not stealthily procured a few shares——'

He was interrupted by a concert of abuse which the name of Hemerlingue provoked amongst those young girls, who disliked the fat banker for the harm he had done their father, and for the harm he was trying to do that good Nabob, adored in the house for the sake of Paul de Géry.

'Hemerlingue, a heartless man! A villain! A wicked man!'

But, in the midst of all those cries, the dreamer followed up his supposition—he saw the big Baron becoming a shareholder of the *Territoriale*, in order to be able to summon his enemy before the court. Imagine the stupefaction of André Maranne, who was a perfect stranger to the whole thing, when Monsieur Joyeuse turned towards him, his face scarlet and swollen, and pointed to him with these terrible words:

'The greatest scoundrel here, Sir, is yourself!'

'Oh! papa, papa; what are you saying?'

'What, eh? Ah! I beg pardon, Monsieur André. I thought myself in the *juge d'instruction's* closet, face to face with that rascal. It is my stupid imagination, which always goes off at a tangent.'

A peal of laughter rang clear in answer, burst out by all the open windows, and mingled outside with the din of rolling carriages and decked-out folks, who were going up the

Avenue des Ternes. The author of *Révolte* made use of the diversion to ask whether they should not soon set out. It was late, the good places would be taken already in the Bois.

'Are you going to the Bois de Boulogne, on a Sunday?' asked Paul de Géry.

'Oh! our wood is not yours,' answered Aline, smiling. 'Come with us, and you shall see.'

Did you ever, O you solitary and contemplative roamer, lie down on your stomach in a grassy copse, surrounded by the trees of a forest, amidst that peculiar vegetation, manifold and variegated, which grows between the fallen leaves of autumn, and let your eyes wander away, skimming the surface of the ground before you? By degrees you lose the feeling of height; the twining branches of the oaks overhead form an inaccessible canopy; and you see a new forest spread out under the other, open its deep avenues, diffused with a green mysterious light,

edged with puny or shaggy shrubs ending with round dome-like summits, and presenting the appearance of wild exotic forms, such as the sugar-cane, the stiff graceful palm-tree, pretty cups each holding a drop of water, branched chandeliers bearing little yellow lights which the passing wind blows out. And wonderful to tell, in the shadow of those light and graceful plants, live other minute plants whose existence, seen so near, reveals all its mysteries. An ant, embarrassed like a wood-cutter under his burden, drags along a bit of bark bigger than itself; a beetle crosses the space which divides a stalk from another on a blade of grass, thrown across like a bridge; whilst under a high, isolated fern, which rises in a cross-road in the middle of a lawn of moss, a little black and blue insect waits with upright feelers for the arrival of a sister insect, hurrying along some desert alley to the trysting-place under the giant tree. It is a little forest under the large one, too near the ground to be seen by its big brother, too lowly, too

hidden, to be reached by its orchestral songs and the roar of its tempests.

Just such a phenomenon takes place at the Bois de Boulogne. Behind those sandy avenues, kept clean and well watered, where rows of carriages, slowly turning round the lake, mark in deep furrows their ceaseless passage; behind that admirable scenery of wall-like verdure, of captive water, of flowery rocks, the true wood, the wild wood, with its living coppices, grows on and overgrows every inch of ground, forming impenetrable groves, crossed by small footpaths and bubbling springs. That is the Bois of the humble, of the lowly, the little forest under the big one. And Paul, who knew nothing of the fashionable Parisian park but its long avenues, its glittering sparkling lake—seen from a coach or a four-wheel break, through the dust, when returning from Longchamp—was astonished at the delightfully snug little corner whereunto his friends had taken him.

They were on the bank of a pond, spread out

like a mirror under willows, covered with water-lilies and duckweed, marked here and there with broad sheaves of light spreading on the liquid surface, which fire-flies streaked with their long legs as if with pointed diamonds.

On that sloping bank, overgrown with thick, fine grass, they had sat down to listen to André's reading; and the pretty, attentive faces, the dresses spread out on the grass, called up the vision of some Decamerone, only more naïve, chaster, and in a calmer atmosphere. To complete that picture of happy nature, of remote country, two wings of a windmill were seen turning, through the branches, in the direction of Suresnes. Nothing of the luxuriant, dazzling spectacle of people and carriages crossing each other in all the cross-roads reached this quiet spot, but the confused and continual rumble, which the ear, getting accustomed to it, ceased at last to perceive. The young eloquent voice of the poet

rose alone in the silence, and the verses flew away with a flutter, repeated by other trembling lips. Earnest, low-spoken words of admiration were occasionally uttered, and a shiver ran through their frames at the tragical passages. Bonne-maman was seen wiping away a big tear. She should not have forgotten her embroidery, you see.

Révolte was André's first work, that first work always too abundant, too branchy, in which an author gives all his stock of ideas and opinions, as thickly garnered up as is the water pressing against a sluice, and which is often the richest if not the best production of a writer. As for the destiny which awaited it, who could have foretold it? That doubt intensified the interest which all felt in the drama, by the individual emotion of each hearer, the innocent hope of Elise, the fanciful hallucinations of Monsieur Joyeuse, and the more matter-of-fact good wishes of Aline, who was arranging beforehand the modest fortune of her sister in the nest,

tossed by the wind, but envied by the crowd, which makes up an artist's home.

If some one of the fashionable idlers, who was turning for the hundredth time round the lake, tired with the monotony of his every-day life, had opened the branches and peeped at this picture, what surprise would have been his! But he could not have suspected what love, what dreams, what poetry and hopes, were centred within that little corner of verdure, hardly bigger than the notched shadow which a fern throws on the moss.

'You were quite right; I did not know the Bois,' whispered Paul to Aline who leant upon his arm.

They were now following a narrow alley, arched over with foliage; and while talking, they walked with a brisk pace, a good deal in advance of the others. But, do not believe that it was old Koutzen and his crisp whitebait which attracted them. No; the beautiful verses they had just heard had made them soar very high,

and they had not come down yet. They were going straight before them, towards the ever receding end of the road, which opened at its extremity into a glorious place full of light, a dust of sunbeams, as if all the sunshine of that fine day was awaiting them at the outskirts of the wood. Never had Paul felt so happy. That light arm resting on his, that child's step on which he measured his own, would, he well knew, have made his life as sweet and easy, as was the present walk upon the moss of the green valley. He felt inclined to say so to the young girl, but he feared lest he should scare away the confidence which Aline reposed in him, and which was no doubt caused by her knowledge of the feelings he entertained for another. That knowledge seemed to banish every thought of love between them.

All at once, right before them, far away on the clear background, a group of riders detached itself, at first vague and indistinct, revealing a man and a woman splendidly mounted,

who were coming along the mysterious alley, among the golden branches, the shadows of leaves, the thousand dots of light with which the ground was strewed. They approached by bounds, displacing the lights and shadows which wrapped them up, as it were, in a net, from the breasts of their horses up to the veil of the lady. They were coming slowly, capriciously; and they passed near the young people, who had walked aside among the trees, with the cracking of new leathern saddles, and the clinking of proudly-shaken curbs. Two splendid horses, white with foam, as if they had been madly galloping, were carrying their riders, closely united, in the narrow paths; he, supporting with one arm the graceful waist of a lady, moulded in a bodice of dark cloth; she, resting her hand on the shoulder of her companion, and tenderly leaning upon it her little head, seen in profile under her small tulle veil, which half covered her face. That loving embrace, waving with the motion of the impatient steeds, that kiss

given in the entanglement of reins, that passion followed in the wood like a hunt, in the open light of the day, in contempt of public opinion, would have sufficed to betray the Duke and Felicia, if the proud and graceful bearing of the lady, the aristocratic ease of her companion, his pale face, slightly flushed by the ride and Jenkins' pearls, had not revealed them already.

It was not an unusual thing to meet Mora at the Bois. Like his august master, he loved to show himself to the Parisians, to keep up his popularity among all classes. Besides, his Duchess never accompanied him on that day, and he could, if he liked, make a halt at the Swiss Cottage, well known to Parisians by the name of Saint-James, with its pink turrets, to which schoolboys pointed 'with bated breath,' among the trees. But it was only a mad, daring woman, like Felicia, who could thus set public opinion at defiance, and sacrifice her reputation for ever.

The noise of hoofs upon the ground, of bushes grazed in the distance, a few blades of grass bending under their tread and slowly rising again behind them, a few branches moved aside to let them pass and then resuming their places, was all that remained of the apparition.

Paul was the first to speak.

'Did you see?' said he.

She had seen and understood, in spite of her innocent candour; for her face was suffused with blushes. We feel shame for the faults of those we love.

'Poor Felicia!' said she, in a low voice; for she pitied not only the poor lost one who had just passed before them, but also Paul, whose heart must have felt that defection deeply. But, if the truth must be told, Paul de Géry had felt no surprise at what he had seen. The meeting justified previous suspicions, and accounted for the instinctive repugnance which he had felt for the charmer, when dining with

her a few days before. But he liked to be pitied by Aline, he liked to feel the sympathy of her tenderest words, of her arm leaning upon his with a closer pressure. He did what children do, who sometimes pretend to be ill in order to be fondled by their mothers; he let his little comforter do her best to console him, speak to him of his brothers, the Nabob, and his own approaching journey to Tunis—a fine country she had heard:

'You must write often, and long letters, too—relate whatever curiosities you see on the way—describe the place you live in. It is easier to see our absent friends when we know something of their surroundings.'

Thus speaking they reached the end of the covered alley, ending in an immense clearing, where jumbled and jostled together all the tumult of the Bois, horses and carriages confusedly mixed up, a crowd which seemed to move in a fleecy cloud of dust, and looked from a certain distance like a flock of sheep. Paul

slackened his step, emboldened by this last minute of solitude.

'Do you know what I am thinking of?' said he, taking Aline's hand. 'I was saying to myself that I should like to be really unhappy for the joy of having you as my comforter. But, although your pity is a precious thing to me, I cannot allow you to waste it on imaginary sufferings. No, my heart is not broken. On the contrary, it lives stronger than ever. Shall I tell you what miracle has saved it, what talisman——'

He placed before her eyes a little oval frame which contained a simple pencil sketch. Aline knew herself at once, and felt surprised at being so pretty, and, so to speak, reflected in the magic mirror of love. Tears started in her eyes, though she could not have said why she cried—a spring gushing from her innocent heart. Paul continued:

'That portrait belongs to me; it was made for me. Yet, on the point of leaving, a scruple

stops me; I want to receive it from yourself. Take it then, and if you find a better friend than me, some one to love you with a deeper truer love—give it to him—I shall not complain.'

She had recovered from her confusion, and looking at de Géry with affectionate seriousness:

'If I listened to my feelings only,' said she, 'I should unhesitatingly answer you; for if you love me as you say—I—I—think—I—love you in return. But, I am not free, I am not alone; look there——'

She pointed to her father and sisters, who were beckoning to her from afar and hastening to join them.

'Well!' answered Paul quickly, 'have I not the same duties, the same cares? You and I are like the widowed heads of two families. Will you not love my charges as much as I love yours?'

'Truly? You mean it? You will leave me

with them? I shall be Aline for you, and still Bonne-maman for all our children? Oh! then,' said the dear creature, beaming with joy and happiness, 'then, here is my portrait; I give it you—and all my soul along with it—for ever!'

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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